JUNE, 1927

Weird Tales

The Unique Magazine

Ray Cummings — Charlton L. Edholm — Wilford Allen
Eli Colter — Victor Rousseau — Henry S. Whitehead

WEIRD TALES

Printed in U.S.A.

Vol. IX, No. 6 — 25c

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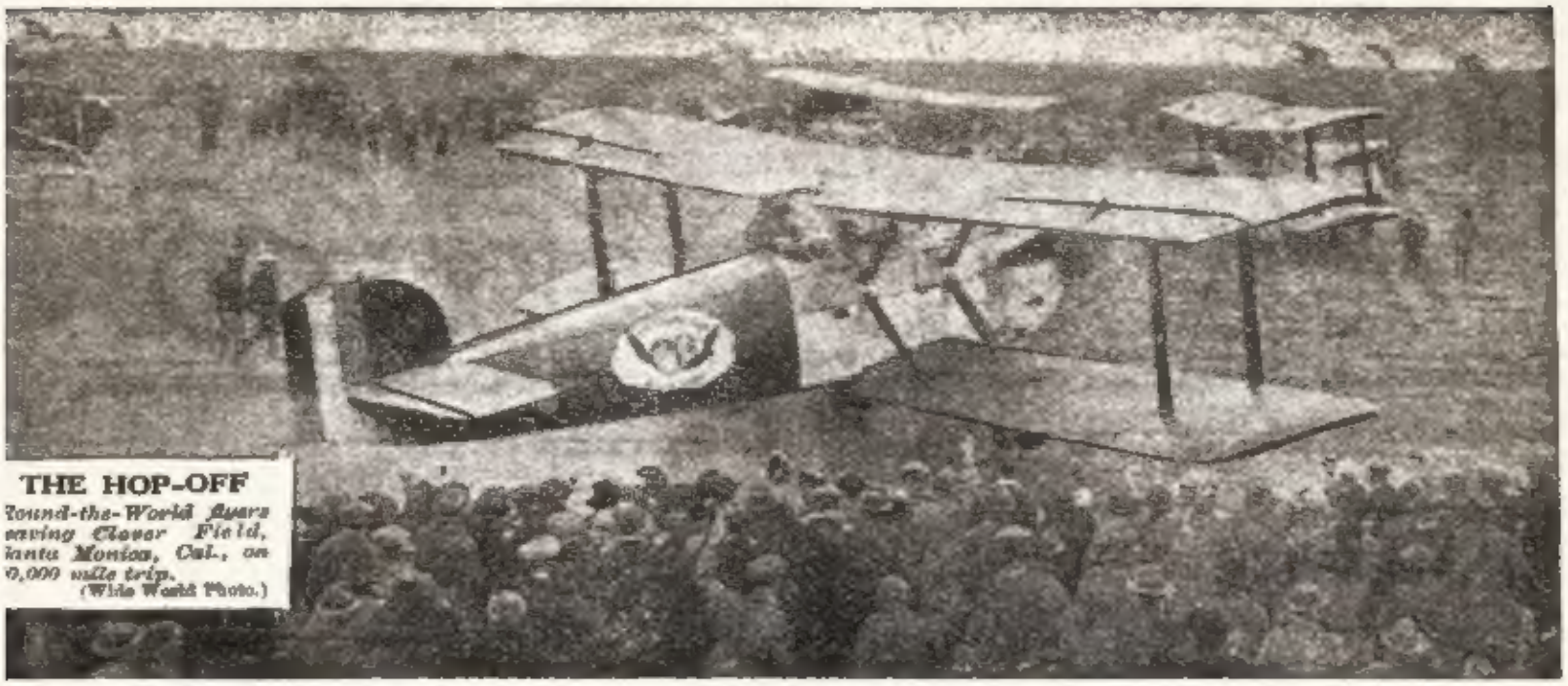

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A MAGAZINE of the BIZARRE and UNUSUAL

VOLUME IX NUMBER 6

Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 2457 E. Washington Street, Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter March 20, 1923, at the post office at Indianapolis, Ind., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. Subscription, $2.50 a year in the United States; $3.00 a year in Canada. English office: G. M. Jeffries Agency, Hopefield House, Hanwell, London, W. 7. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers.

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A Suitor from the Shades

by Greye La Spina

"No—no—no!" she screamed, and sank back unconscious into the arms of her father.

"CHECK!" Father Rooney chuckled deep in his throat, and lifted his hand from the knight that had just made an unexpected foray among his opponent's pieces.

The old doctor leaned over the board to study the situation carefully. "It does look as though you had me," he admitted unwillingly. "Well, next time you may not have such good luck."

"Luck?" queried the priest softly, a whimsical smile curving his lips.

"Poor papa! You are always beating him, Father," reproached a soft voice from the other end of the room.

The floor lamp illuminated a narrow circle about the chess players and but dimly disclosed a little figure that pressed against the curtain at the open window as though to escape observation from without as well as from within. Against the wall behind her the polished surface of a pair of crutches caught the light in long lines. It was characteristic of Clare that she should put unpleasant things behind her.

The face she turned occasionally toward the chess players disclosed singular beauty, even in the softly diffused light of the big lamp. One saw dark, sensitive eyes and felt the tenderness of the habitual gentle smile that made her expression so attractive. Her low forehead was shaded by light brown hair that fell over her small ears and was knotted loosely at the nape of a slender neck. But Clare's real beauty lay in the spirituality that beamed from her eyes.

There was a brilliant moon. Clare, gazing out into the garden, thought she had never seen it as strange as it seemed that night. It was a mysterious dreamland, not the garden she knew. It was full of unexpected patches of light that changed shape imperceptibly as the moon swam up-

ward across the sky, and against these light spots, outlining them abruptly, were massively upreared structures of ebony-black shadow. The garden she thought she knew so well was like an unknown, entirely new country and one that, oddly enough, seemed to hold a dark threat in those ominous shadows that crept upon and engulfed the moonlit spots that relieved its blackness.

A slow shudder crept over the slight figure of the lame girl, who leaned back instinctively against the curtain and toward the soft and homely light of the tall lamp beneath which sat her father and his old friend at their game of chess. Still her gaze was held by the garden in its new aspect.

Out of the black shadows a figure advanced into a moonlit space, and like some goddess of the night lifted slim arms to her sister queen floating in her cloud chariot overhead. Out upon the hush of the night floated the rich notes Clare so adored. "Ah," she murmured with a kind of relief in her voice, "Margaret is going to sing."

The song was Ned Wentworth's *Ode to the Queen of Night.* It was the favorite lyric in Ned's last musical comedy, then crowding one of New York's best theaters night after night, incidentally filling Ned's pockets with gold. Clare closed her eyes that the velvet tones might have their full effect upon her entranced senses.

At the other end of the room, the chess players stopped their game to listen, the chess board carefully balanced across their old knees. Father Rooney characteristically lifted his kindly eyes heavenward, although his physical gaze was limited by the low ceiling; the old doctor's eyes went straight to the great portrait that hung over the divan, the portrait of his dead wife.

For Clare the evil spell lying upon the garden was broken. The strange enchantment with its vague threat passed away at the thrill of that dear voice. As the tones died away on a lingering high note, she turned her face upon her sister and opened her eyes. Margaret was apparently all alone in the still night and the lonely garden. The chess players had resumed their game; the lame girl could hear their occasional low murmurs.

"Where can Ned be?" she questioned as she gazed.

Ned Wentworth had been standing in the black shadow of a great walnut tree, watching the throbbing of Margaret's full throat as her rich notes poured out their benediction upon the still night air. His heart expanded so painfully that it seemed it must burst; her beauty actually hurt him. He looked hungrily at the great coils of heavy auburn hair, gleaming with gold under the magical light of the autumn moon; he saw as if for the first time the healthy pallor of her clear skin thrown into relief as she lifted her face upward in her invocation to the Queen of Night; he followed the line of the fine throat that swept into and was absorbed by the noble curve of her bust; and he clenched his fists with his effort to control himself—he felt that he could no longer refrain from telling her how madly he loved her.

He stepped impulsively toward her as the last gorgeous notes quivered upon the cool silence and died softly away. She paused, hands still outstretched as she had stood while singing, lost in the maze of emotion that had suddenly swept over her at Ned's impulsive movement. Rich scarlet began to mount in her cheeks until they blazed hotly under the tranquil light of the cold Lady of Night. Into the broad sweep of moonlight beside her stepped her lover, his gray eyes almost black with the intensity of his feeling; he did not speak, nor did she. It appeared to them that they had

both been waiting for this very moment all their lives.

Margaret was quite motionless, her head very high, dark eyes on his face steadily, gravely, as if the wonder and richness of her emotion were too great to be carried off lightly. Ned took another step forward, a movement that brought her still outstretched arms to his shoulders, upon which her light palms dropped tenderly.

"Margie! Then it is true? You love me?"

He swept her into his embrace; her arms met about his neck and he felt her hands caressing his hair. Sudden self-consciousness fell upon them and they drew back into the shade of the walnut lest they be observed from the house.

2

With such careless haste that the chessmen were tossed hither and thither, Father Rooney sprang from his chair and across the room.

"What ails our little girl?" cried the old priest, deeply disturbed.

Dr. Sloane got out of his chair with more difficulty; sciatica had made a semi-invalid of him for months. He joined the other man who leaned over Clare. The blond head lay on outstretched arms across the window-sill. So motionless was she that for a terrible moment her father felt the clutching fear which his love for the daughter so like his dead wife made more terrible.

The priest held a listening ear against the girl's side. "She lives, old friend. Her heart is beating—but sluggishly. Let me carry her to the divan, where she will be more comfortable. It is only a fainting spell."

Father Rooney knew well the name of the fear that was lifting a grisly head in his friend's breast, and his heart ached for the old doctor, who followed him haltingly and painfully as he carried the limp little form across the room and disposed it on the broad divan. Sitting beside her, the priest began to stroke Clare's hands softly, while her father held a bottle of salts under her nose.

The lame girl stirred feebly. Then suddenly she broke out into hysterical sobbing, so heart-racking and so pitiful that tears rose to the eyes of the old priest who had seen so much, heard so much, of human suffering, that one felt he must have grown hardened by it. Now, however, he sat stroking a limp, cold hand, and hot tears slowly formed in his eyes and dropped upon it.

He loved Clare as though she had been his own child. Hers was a rare soul that knew and appreciated the lofty truths in his church just as she recognized and loved the same unchangeable truths that formed the foundation of the faith of her fathers. For so young a girl (she was only nineteen) Clare possessed a lucidity of thought and a fairness of judgment that made her especially interesting to the good priest, who secretly believed her one of God's favored souls.

"She has never been like this before," worried Dr. Sloane, wrinkled brow troubled. "Clare, dear! Clare! It's Dad calling you, dear. Clare!"

The girl's sobbing increased in intensity. Her body began to writhe on the divan as if in sharp agony. The priest in Father Rooney lifted an attentive ear to the undertones of this sobbing that somehow fell strangely upon that clerical ear; he felt intuitively that here was a matter of soul trouble, not a mere hysterical weakness on Clare's part, and he was deeply disturbed.

Suddenly he looked up sharply and threw a searching glance about the room. His eye met that of Dr. Sloane, who had also looked about quickly.

"I would have sworn that there was someone else in the room just now," said the doctor in a puzzled

tone, as he met his friend's gaze. "Didn't you feel it, yourself?"

The expression of the priest's face was troubled. "A very unpleasant someone, if you care for my opinion," he declared dryly. "I presume it was the effect on us of our poor little Clare's hysterics," he offered, but without conclusiveness.

Clare had become quiet and lay very still. At last her dark eyes opened heavily and she searched the solicitous faces of the two men contritely. "Sorry I made such a fuss," she murmured. "It wasn't like me, was it? I—I don't know what happened to me. It—it wasn't like a heart attack. It was as if something from outside had robbed me of all my strength, in an unguarded moment." She paused, her lips parted as if to say more, then closed firmly.

Father Rooney's brow wrinkled ever so slightly; a half-puzzled expression, that had rested on his face a moment past, returned. He looked gravely at the delicate beauty of the face on the divan cushion. Her last words—and her silence—had disturbed him far more than he cared to admit to himself; for some strange reason they seemed ominous. It was with an effort that he threw off his depression to meet the two radiant faces that now looked in at the door.

"Father, Ned and I—— What's the matter? Is anything the matter with Clare?" Margaret sprang from the encircling arm of her lover to kneel at the side of the divan. The shadow that always lay, though ever so lightly, upon her younger sister, was a dread shadow and its gloom now drew fringes of trailing darkness across the bliss of her new happiness.

"It's quite nothing, Margie darling. Don't be frightened. Anyway, I'm all right now," Clare hastened to reassure her.

Then with characteristic self-forgetfulness—and none but the wise old priest knew how generous was her spirit at that moment—Clare put out her hand to Ned.

"You and Margie—love each other? How beautiful! Forgive me if I cry. I'm just glad you're both so happy." She turned her face against the pillow and began to cry softly. So different was it from her previous hysterical weeping that the priest drew a small, half-smothered sigh of relief. He rose, touching with kindly benediction the soft hair.

"Good night, Clare. Good night, all. I must be on my way."

"But you haven't congratulated us yet," interrupted Margaret, springing to her feet and turning a beaming face upon him.

"May heaven send you its richest blessings, my daughter," he told her gravely. "And you, too, Mr. Wentworth." His hand went out to Ned in a hearty handshake.

Dr. Sloane had sunk into a near-by armchair, reminded painfully of his sciatica by twinges that doubled him up after his recent exertions. He waved one hand at the departing cleric.

"I really need a hankie," apologized Clare comically from the depths of her cushion. Ned whipped out one and tried to dry her eyes in big-brotherly fashion. "I can do it better," she said.

Ned suddenly threw a quick glance at the door. "Did someone come in?" he asked the doctor.

"No one."

"That's strange. I felt someone looking at me from the doorway."

"Ned, you're dreaming tonight," Margaret rallied him, laughing. "He felt eyes on him while we were in the garden."

"Then they must have been mine," Clare said, sitting up. "I was watching Margaret while she sang."

Ned and Margaret exchanged glances; both colored and laughed, but Clare's pale face remained impassive. They exchanged glances again;

Clare could not have seen that first rapture of their love, after all.

II

It was nearly midnight when the sisters finally retired to the room they shared together. There had been a bottle of old port opened that the healths of the young pair might be toasted. And it seemed that the hours had only been minutes, to Margaret.

"Clare darling, I've kept you up awfully late tonight," she apologized with compunction, turning a flushed, happy face to her sister. "You should have been in bed ages ago."

"This is a special night, Margie."

"Wasn't it magnificent?" Margaret's voice dropped into an almost solemn key as she stopped brushing out her wonderful auburn hair. "It seemed to — us — that there had never been such a night before."

"I thought much the same. But, Margie, did it seem to you—don't tell me I'm imagining things, please—did it seem to you that there was something strange, something almost awful, about the beauty of the garden tonight? I was really afraid of it, and I have never felt that way before. But tonight it actually seemed that there was a presence abroad, a presence that boded no good to someone."

Margaret, her smooth forehead wrinkled, whirled about suddenly to face her sister.

"That's odd," she commented bruskly. "Ned complained of the very same feeling. He declared that he felt jealous, envious eyes upon him."

Clare tumbled over into bed and turned her face from her sister. She slipped something under her pillow as she did so—it was Ned's handkerchief. In a smothered voice she said. "Margie! That was not a heart attack I had this evening."

"Clare dear, you are dreaming. If it wasn't a heart attack, what was it?"

"That is just what I would give worlds to know," answered the other girl earnestly. "Margie, there *was* something strange in our garden tonight, something no one could see—but it was there, nevertheless. And —I know what it was! Oh, don't turn out the light, Margie! I just can't sleep in the dark tonight."

Such unusual timidity on Clare's part made Margaret look at her sister searchingly. Then she sat on the edge of the bed and began to smooth the brown hair gently.

"And what was it you saw in the garden?" she inquired, with a touch of light humor in her tone.

"I didn't see. I just felt. But something took all my strength out of me suddenly. It was as if something else had clothed itself with my body, only my body didn't go with it into the garden; it stayed inside. But I knew — I know — all that that Other saw and did."

"Dearest, you are overwrought and tired. This glorious night has thrown a spell over you and it has been too much for your tired little head."

"Margie!" Clare drew herself up to a sitting posture. "Do you remember Clifford Bentley?" There was so much significance in her tone that the older girl gave her an amazed look as she replied affirmatively.

"Margie, Clifford Bentley was in the garden tonight, spying on you and Ned."

For a moment Margaret regarded her sister with a kind of terror; then she broke into a soft laugh.

"Oh, come now, Clare, that is too much to ask me to believe. Clifford Bentley has been dead many years, quite too dead, poor boy, to come wandering about our garden."

"But he was there," persisted Clare stubbornly. "I tell you, Margie, I *felt* him there. Please don't

laugh. I am quite serious. Oh, why can't you understand? Don't you remember his last words to you?"

Margaret's face paled under the warm color and she stared wide-eyed at her sister.

"I remember—I was to remain true to him until death joined us; and if I did not—but Clare! How absurd! He a mere boy of fifteen and I an infant of eleven! It is so ridiculous that I can't help laughing, dearest."

"It isn't ridiculous," protested Clare unhappily but positively. "Because he may be able to cause trouble between you and Ned yet. You know, Margie, you owe your life to Clifford—and if it had not been for you, he would be alive and well now."

"Clare, you are positively idiotic tonight! I must insist that you go to sleep and get rid of your morbid thoughts. Why should you try to spoil my wonderful night, the most beautiful of my life?"

MARGARET withdrew pettishly, and a few minutes afterward Clare heard her tucking herself into her own bed, that stood on the other side of their common reading stand. Slowly the lame girl slipped down into her bed again, but her eyes did not close. Still, she was not looking at the picture which she stared at; she was looking back across the years to the time when Margaret was eleven and she was nine—and Clifford Bentley fifteen.

It was a boy-and-girl love affair—precocious, to be sure. Clifford adored the little tomboy with her mop of brilliant hair and her impulsiveness and her enchanting ways. She had let him put his seal ring upon her "engagement" finger, in return for his promise to give her a ride on his iceboat. That had been a wonderful sport! Then the tragic moment came when the thin ice broke under a too-sudden turn of the skeleton craft, and both children had been thrown into the icy water by the shock. It was Clifford who first came to the surface; it was he who dived and groped under the ice for Margaret, who brought her unconscious to the surface.

When rescue came, the boy's coat was wrapped about the girl's shivering form. Both children had had pneumonia from the exposure, but it was Clifford who had not survived it. His last words to his mother had been for Margaret: "Tell her I expect her to be true to me until death joins us. If she is not true, I shall come back to remind her of her promise."

Clare, reviewing the pathetic and tragic little story, felt deep sympathy for Clifford, Clifford who had given his life for Margaret and was now forgotten. She, too, would gladly have done the same. She lay very quiet, although she did not sleep.

As she heard the library clock chime the hours once, twice, she suddenly moved the handkerchief and pressed it against her lips. As she did it she breathed out a prayer for Ned Wentworth and his happiness. Then with a little sigh, she slipped softly off to sleep.

4

NED WENTWORTH could not sleep. He filled his pipe and settled down before the hearth where glowed the urbanite's humble apology for a wood-fire, a gas log. He had felt it impossible to write while he was fresh from the sweet influence of Margaret's presence; he wanted to think over his happiness. Also, he wanted to think over another thing—an intuition he had had of a something sinister hovering near while he had been in the garden with Margaret.

Exactly as he had told his sweetheart, he had *felt* burning, envious, malignant eyes fixed upon him from

the black shadows of the garden. Even when he had taken Margaret into the lighted room, he had felt this entity near at hand. Who could it be that was trying to penetrate his objective consciousness so strangely? Who could be so bitter against the man who had won Margaret's love, except some rival? He entertained not the slightest doubt that it was an unsuccessful rival whose bitter envy he had felt. But who?

He remembered distinctly that in the moment Margaret had finished her song, turning to him with all her soul in her eyes, he had felt as though someone stood between them, someone about whose person he must pass to reach her. Who could this individual be who was interested in separating two young people so eminently suited to each other? Ned simply could not understand the situation, yet felt that it was a tangible situation. The fact that this unknown person was strong enough to make his unseen presence strongly felt was sufficient to give thought to the young lover. But an invisible rival could not long occupy Ned's thoughts to the exclusion of pleasanter things. He mused and smoked while the hours fled.

The clock struck one. Simultaneously, Ned Wentworth sprang, as if catapulted, out of his chair, and whirled around to face the door, in full expectancy of seeing a stranger there. The doorway was vacant; it framed nothing but empty air. The young man's eye roved the apartment with keen scrutiny. There was nothing more suspicious than a tall screen that served to hide his writing desk from the rest of the room. Upon this screen Ned's glance finally rested with curious intentness. Then he shook himself impatiently and again sat down before the hearth. The impression of a strange presence was so strong, however, that he was induced to move his chair so that he faced the screen.

For fully five minutes he sat motionless, smoking. Then he rose, went directly to the screen, whirled it aside and looked behind it. Nobody there. Furious at himself for entertaining the thought of a discarnate personality, he yet found himself considering it; he was actually angry because he had given the unknown the satisfaction of seeing him look behind the screen. When he returned to his place before the hearth, he deliberately turned his chair so that the screen was behind him.

He refilled his pipe and touched a match to it nonchalantly. Stealing insidiously into his mind came thoughts of the girl who sang his *Ode to the Queen of Night* at the performances in the Bedford Theater. She was slight and graceful, lacking Margaret's robust, fearless poise; dainty and petite, while Margaret was almost too heavy to be graceful; she was charmingly pretty and knew just how to make herself fascinating, while Margaret made not the slightest pretext at using beauty aids, such as rouge, which with her dead-white skin would be so attractive. Beatrice Randall knew how to charm and fascinate a man, Ned reflected with a slow smile; Margaret, unfortunately, was entirely without that subtle mystery, that feminine art and guile, that attracts the male so positively. Beatrice would go any length to enchant an admirer; Margaret would have considered such efforts beneath her. On the whole, thought Ned, when Margaret sang his *Ode* she appeared a proud and unapproachable goddess; when Beatrice sang it, she was a most approachable, enticing, and desirable woman.

Instinctively Wentworth glanced up at the mantel shelf where a framed portrait of Margaret stood. As he looked, his brow contracted; a puzzled, almost startled expression

flitted over his face. He put down his pipe. Incredulous, indignant, remorseful, he reached for the photograph and carried it to his lips.

"Three hours engaged," he said, and whistled. "Three hours engaged —and beginning to criticize Margaret! Comparing her with another woman who isn't fit to tie her shoes. What on earth has got into me?"

Then he remembered the entrance of that sinister presence a few minutes ago. Furious indignation swept over him as he began to realize what had taken place; the thing was intolerable. A gust of futile anger shook him. . . . Someone with a deep interest in Margaret Sloane was attempting telepathically to turn his mind from her, and toward some other woman. He put Margaret's portrait on the table beside him and clenched his fists as he faced about toward the empty room.

Aloud he exclaimed: "Whoever you are that is trying to separate Margaret and me, you can not prevail. We love each other! You may as well be off, my invisible rival, for I am on my guard now." He laughed grimly but shamefacedly at his spoken words. They seemed absurd, addressed to thin air, but he had the feeling that whatever or whoever it was that had entered his room and had actually succeeded for a few minutes in swaying his thoughts, this personality would understand—if not his words, his intentions.

He looked long at Margaret's portrait, his lips parting in a tender smile. Who could compare with her? Ah, there was never such a glorious girl; how could he have thought otherwise, even for a passing moment? To be sure, she was a bit over-independent, and a man enjoys the clinging-vine type of woman for a sweetheart. Beatrice Randall was just such a helpless little thing; with all her guile and her feminine arts, a man felt he must look after the child. How appealingly feminine she was when she sang his *Ode* in that entrancing "little girl" way of hers; no wonder it always brought down the house. Now Margaret had a way of surrounding herself with such an atmosphere of independence, of proud confidence in herself, that a man almost felt he would be entirely superfluous in her life. Now that she was engaged to be married, it would not be such a bad idea for her to cultivate a little more of the womanly attitude of helpless dependence that was so pretty in Beatrice.

Ned had been pacing back and forth. He stopped and stood stockstill; the sickening realization swept over him that once more the unknown rival had entered into his secret thoughts and swung them away from Margaret. It was too much! He caught up a hat and stick, and went out of the house to walk about under the stars; perhaps the presence would tire of following him about in the open. It may have been so; it may also have been that the unknown had done all he cared to do for one night. After a brisk hour's walk, Ned found his mind cleared of its cobwebs, and he went home, to sleep soundly.

5

With daylight, Ned's recollections of his uncanny experience faded as dreams in one's first waking moments; he remembered only that he had unaccountably given more thought to the prima donna in his musical comedy than he had ever given that damsel before, or ever would again, he told himself.

Ostensibly to inquire about Clare, but in reality to assure himself of his happiness, he telephoned Margaret early.

"Clare's all right. But she's worrying herself sick over an utterly ri-

diculous fancy, an absurd thing she declares took place last night."

"What was that?" Ned's voice was vaguely troubled.

"Some kind of ghostly visitor who she insists visited us last night. Dad is encouraging her; yes, he is. He declares that he and Father Rooney felt the presence of an outsider in the room last night when Clare had that fainting spell. For my own part, I felt nothing. I consider the whole subject too utterly absurd for discussion."

"Not as ridiculous as it may seem at first glance, dear," Ned replied hesitantly, a sudden flood of memory rushing upon him, carrying conviction with it. "I had a rather strange experience last night, myself." Even as he said it, he hoped Margaret would not insist upon details; how would it sound in her ears that he had spent hours thinking about some other woman when he had just engaged himself to her?

"What happened, Ned?"

"Really, the thing was so intangible that it would be extremely difficult to put it into words," hedged Wentworth desperately. "Perhaps when I see you I can explain better than I can over the telephone now."

This excuse appearing reasonable, Margaret did not insist further, much to Ned's relief. But the girl was far more troubled after this conversation than she cared to admit to herself. She fidgeted about the house, wishing it were evening; in the evening Father Rooney would surely be over to inquire about her sister, and she wanted to hear from his own lips if he had felt any supernatural experience the night before.

Margaret scoffed at the ridiculous idea that a boy of fifteen should come back from the dead to keep her from marrying another man, even granted that the boy had attained manhood in another world in the meantime. Her keen sense of humor and her abounding good health combined to restrain her thoughts from wild surmises; she merely wondered if some contagion of diseased thought had fastened upon the others of her immediate circle, leaving her untouched. This seemed far more probable to her, than that the veil separating the visible and invisible worlds could have been lifted to permit the entrance into her life of a long-dead boy sweetheart.

She did not have to wait until evening to see the old priest. About 3 o'clock she saw him entering the garden. He stopped to speak with Clare, who was basking in the sunshine.

"Cobwebs brushed away?" he asked the lame girl, pointedly.

She colored but met his eyes bravely. "Oh, yes, Father."

He looked keenly at her slightly clouded face. "Perhaps there is something I can do for you, my child?"

"I'm afraid you would be the last one to help me," she laughed ruefully. "I want to find out the name and address of a good psychic. I must talk with someone who understands—supernatural things. There is an influence abroad that bodes evil to Ned—and to my sister," she added hastily, lowering her eyes before the kindly scrutiny of the priest.

"I wish I could help you, Clare." He paused a moment, considering. "If you were only a Catholic, my child," he added regretfully.

"But it isn't religious help that I want, Father. What I need is something that I don't believe you could give me. If I only knew what to do!"

"Can't you leave it in higher hands than those of a mere mortal, my daughter? If you can do that with your whole heart, the problem will be solved for you. You believe that, do you not?"

She nodded slowly and thought-

fully. The old man passed a caressing hand over her brown locks, sighed, and went up the path with knit brow.

Margaret, impatiently waiting for him, was standing at the top of the porch steps.

"Ned called up this morning, Father," she said abruptly. He persists in saying that he had an uncanny experience last night. My sister says the same, and Dad. Father Rooney, do you believe that a man can come back from the dead, in these days?"

"Why 'in these days'?" he inquired whimsically. "These days differ in no way from other days, Margaret; they are all a part of eternity."'

"But do you?"

"What difference would it make, Margaret, what *I* believe? In the olden days, did not someone ask that same question? It is in Holy Writ, Margaret."

"You are evading my question, Father," the girl cried with an impatient shake of her head.

"What do *you* think, Margaret?" asked the old priest mildly.

"I don't know what to think. Clare says it is true. Ned—why, I actually believe he would agree with her; Dad, too. Tell me, did you feel someone in the room with us last night, someone we couldn't see?"

Her question was sufficiently pointed this time for Father Rooney to get the drift of her inquiry; he smiled.

"My child, a priest becomes very intuitive, and senses presences good and evil that other people do not ordinarily feel. It is his study, his ardent prayers, his meditations alone, that make him more sensitive. And a man who employs his brain in creative work, as does Mr. Wentworth, is also liable to psychic impressions. Your dear father—why, he is a physician, and a good physician must be intuitive. While as for our little Clare—ah, her physical disability has kept her very near the Unseen; you can trust her intuitions, Margaret."

"How about me?" scornfully.

"You are far less liable to such delicate impressions, because you are in robust health; your employments are active physical employments; your outlook upon life is—well, my child; largely material. There," and he raised a hand to still her quick protest, "you have not yet had a sorrow, my child. When you have suffered disillusion, disappointment, grief—then perhaps you will find yourself closer than now, to the veil that hides the Unseen."

"In other words, Father, the rest of you felt that there was a spook in the room, but for me that spook didn't exist?"

"Something like that, Margaret; something like that. I don't know but that you are better off than we are, in that respect. It is not always a pleasant thing to have these other entities thrust themselves upon one's notice without invitation."

"Well," with a slightly scornful laugh, "when I see a spirit, I shall believe that they exist and return to earth, but I fear I shall never be convinced by my own good eyes."

Little did Margaret dream as she spoke so skeptically under what circumstances her own good eyes were to teach her the frailness of the veil that separates the material and the spiritual worlds!

Father Rooney shook one finger at the young girl in half-playful admonition.

"I wish there were some way to help my little Clare," he murmured to himself as he went on into the house. "She is too susceptible to psychic influences. May our Lady watch over her," he finished softly and earnestly.

6

"WHY, there comes Mrs. Campbell across the road. I wonder what she wants?" Margaret went slowly down the path to meet the visitor, stopping at Clare's side to drop her gentle hands on the lame girl's drooping shoulders.

The woman who came briskly up the bricked path was short and rather heavily built without being actually stout. Her graying hair was pulled back tightly from her round face and drawn into a "figure eight" at the nape of the neck. Although her face had not the slightest trace of actual beauty, her features were prepossessing; there was about her that atmosphere of homely and agreeable motherliness that warms the heart. She wore a starched white linen shirtwaist and a pepper-and-salt tailored skirt, to the black belt of which was hooked a chatelaine bag of black leather. Stout black shoes completed her utilitarian, rather than handsome, clothes.

As she approached the sisters, Clare leaned forward with a kind of breathless interest, her eyes fixed upon the newcomer. A mixture of anxiety and expectation appeared on the lame girl's face.

Mrs. Campbell did not speak until she was directly up to the girls; it would have been most unlike her to have wasted her energy upon the balmy afternoon air by speaking when there was a possibility of not being heard perfectly.

"Well, Margaret and Clare, good afternoon, both of you. Clare, I came over especially to see you," she said abruptly.

Margaret laughed musically.

"Well, that *is* unkind of you, Mrs. Campbell," she said. "Am I to take that as a summary dismissal?"

"You can stay if you like, Margaret, but I'm thinking that you would not believe a word I'm going to say, and I don't choose to give you the chance to laugh at me, Margaret Sloane."

Clare gasped audibly. Margaret, although accustomed to her Scotch neighbor's frankness, pretended to be offended.

"Really, Mrs. Campbell, if you think me incapable of appreciating your pearls of wisdom——"

She moved off with her swinging, easy walk, leaving Clare gazing after her with troubled eyes. The lame girl was deeply disturbed, and it was not until Margaret turned to throw her half-mocking smile that she realized her sister's pique was more apparent than real.

The Scotchwoman went directly to the heart of her message.

"My dear, do you know that there was a stranger in your garden last night?"

"Then you saw him?" gasped the girl, starting involuntarily at the other's words.

"Ah, you know, then?"

"I—I felt his presence," admitted Clare.

"Well, I saw him, and I hope I don't see him again. He isn't a pleasant individual," dryly. "Do you know who he is, Clare? Spirits like that don't usually trouble human beings unless there is some powerful tie between them. Be frank with me, my dear. I may be able to help you, and I foresee that you may need help, you and Margaret, too."

Clare drew a long breath. "His name, if I'm not mistaken, is Clifford Bentley," she began. And she plunged into the forlorn little story of the childhood romance with its tragic ending. Her listener nodded understandingly.

"Do you think he intends to make any trouble for my sister?" asked the lame girl anxiously.

"I'm afraid he does, Clare. I'll tell you what I saw. He was looking

over your shoulder into the garden at Margaret. Suddenly he leaned over you, and you disappeared in a cloud of luminous vapor. But the luminosity, Clare, was not that light shed from the aura of an entity that is trying to uplift itself or others; it was the murky, red-shot vapor that betrayed the presence of evil.

"Whether it is evil for you or for Margaret, matters little, for that entity has taken advantage of your physical weakness, your psychic susceptibility, your unselfish nature, and unless you can beat off his influence, you will end by becoming little better than the instrument by which that evil thing will eventually seek to make its actual physical appearance among us."

"Mrs. Campbell! You terrify me!"

"I terrify myself," said the lady, dryly. "If you only could have seen that evil atmosphere that enveloped you——." The pause was eloquent; Clare met it with understanding eyes.

"It was that I felt, then. It was that which robbed me of consciousness. Oh, dear Mrs. Campbell, you have the wonderful gift of second-sight. Can't you tell me what this all means? Why has he come back?"

The Scotchwoman nodded with the half-proud, half-mortified air of one who admits something to one's detriment, which yet one can not help but consider a merit.

"Yes, Clare, I have the second-sight. My mother had it, and my grandmother before her. It's a wonderful thing, as you say—but not such a pleasant thing, sometimes."

"Tell me what to do, won't you? I know Mr. Campbell hates to have you exercise your power—but—isn't this an exceptional occasion?" begged the lame girl.

"Clare, I'll try." She glanced cautiously at the house as she spoke, to ascertain if Margaret were in sight. "You know, I can not promise success. It is for this that I can not discuss the thing with your sister; Margaret is so skeptical that I would be quite uneasy in her presence, and unable to let myself go, as I must if I wish to go into a trance."

She moved closer to the girl. "Give me your two hands, my dear," she commanded gently, her voice seeming already to come from a distance. She stood perfectly stiff for a moment, while the lame girl's whole soul was watching in her eyes.

There was not the slightest suspicion in Clare's mind as to the seeress' honesty. The Sloanes had known the Campbells for more than seven years, and no one in the suburb had anything but admiration and respect for the little Scotchwoman. Douglas Campbell, while admitting his wife's gift of second-sight, was stubbornly set against her use of it; he believed it a weakening and unhealthy practise even when exercised by an effort of the will. In this Laura Campbell differed from her husband, but was too docile a wife to question his well-meant authority—at least, in public. It is a fact that when she felt herself justified, she had no hesitation in yielding to her intuitions, and in the case of the Sloane girls her friendliness for them drove her to seek them out for the purpose, for she had seen plainly that the uninvited guest of the previous night was an undesirable, and might prove a troublesome, visitor.

After a long moment, during which Clare felt her heart beating loudly and painfully, the Scotchwoman began to speak. Her intonation was stiff and harsh, the very opposite of her customary rapid, easy speech. The words dropped off her lips slowly, one by one, with monotonous regularity. Meantime her hands gripped those of the lame girl with a grip that made Clare wince.

"You — seek — to — learn — the reason — for — my — presence. You — shall — know — soon — enough. Tell — Margaret — that — she — must — never — marry — Ned — Wentworth. While — you — live — I — have — the — means — to — prevent — it — but — I — will — not — trouble — her — if — she — will — keep — her — vow — to — me."

"Oh!" Clare Sloane cried out suddenly as if in acute pain.

The seeress gave a deep sigh, shuddered from head to foot, and closed her eyes tightly. Then she released the hands she had been holding so tightly, and opened her eyes, to see the lame girl laboring for breath, her head thrown back on the cushions.

"Margaret! Margaret! Bring your sister's tablets!"

Mrs. Campbell began to stroke and beat at one of the delicate hands, while she looked anxiously toward the house. Margaret came running down the path, a glass of water in one hand and Clare's medicine in the other. She threw a reproachful look at their neighbor, as she hastily began to minister to her sister.

"What on earth did you tell Clare, to upset her like this?" asked the elder girl, indignantly.

"I'm sorry, Margaret, but I can't tell you what upset her."

"You mean, you *won't* tell me," flashed the girl.

"No, I mean just what I said. She's reviving—look, the color is coming into her cheeks again."

"What did you do? Did you try any of that trance business?"

"Clare asked me to try it for her," replied the other woman quickly. "It was to help her out about something," she hesitated.

"And you mean to tell me," scornfully, "that you don't know what you told her?"

"You're going a little too far, Margaret," rebuked the Scotchwoman, indignant in her turn. "I'm not accustomed to having my word disputed. If you knew anything at all about the nature of a trance, you would know that the medium is never aware of what is said."

"Oh, I believe you," hastily. "Clare, darling, are you feeling better now?"

Clare was breathing more naturally, and her cheeks were not as pallid as they had been a moment since. Her hands were still cold to the solicitous Margaret's touch, and the girl began chafing them. Clare, as soon as she could speak, began to beg brokenly, "Oh, can you tell me what he meant? Was it you talking? Or was it *he* speaking with your lips?"

"He?" Mrs. Campbell's lips parted; she looked strangely at the lame girl. "What did I say? Tell me everything, Clare. Don't forget a single word."

Clare repeated it, to the best of her ability.

"I don't like that," said the Scotchwoman anxiously. "He means, that while you live, he can control you psychically, gathering from you the force to make himself felt unpleasantly on this plane. The alternative is," and she directed her gaze sharply and narrowly at Margaret, who colored under it resentfully, "the alternative is, that Margaret keeps her vow to him, her vow never to marry."

"In other words, Mrs. Campbell, my sister must pay for my happiness with her life, or I must pay for her life with my happiness? Excuse me," coldly, "but I think you go too far with this mysterious jargon. Come, Clare dear, the sun is sinking. Let me help you into the house."

The Scotchwoman silently assisted in drawing Clare to her feet and adjusted the crutches, while Margaret picked up the cushions upon which the lame girl had been reclining. As

the sisters went slowly up the path to the house, she stood watching them with perturbed countenance.

"It's bad. It's very, very bad. And Margaret won't believe the peril she is in. Poor Clare! I must tell Douglas of this. If it comes to the worst, he'll have to permit me to make up a circle, and Dr. Sloane will have to override Margaret's objections—for object she surely will, unless she falls into the sphere of influence of that unwelcome guest, herself. I can only watch—and pray," she whispered to herself.

7

NED WENTWORTH was an impulsive lover. Moreover, his uncanny obsession on the night of his engagement to Margaret had weighed on his mind; he felt that the sooner they were married, the sooner the unseen rival for the girl's affections would be induced to leave the field to him. He lost no time, therefore, in urging an early marriage upon Margaret.

His plans met with Dr. Sloane's approval. The old man was relieved to see at least one of his girls happily married and provided for. In secret he grieved much for his younger daughter, whose lameness might prove a serious obstacle to her satisfactory settlement in life. He agreed that Ned and Margaret should be married very quietly early in the coming month, and that after the wedding the young pair should make an extended trip through the Southwest.

Margaret's days became an orgy of shopping expeditions. Her nights were occupied with dreams of the happy future she was going to spend with her lover. The ominous and mysterious words of Mrs. Campbell had apparently been erased from her mind. Not so with Clare; the lame girl remembered with terrible distinctness the dilemma that her sister had so tersely and indignantly stated; one of the two must pay for the other's life or happiness by sacrificing her own.

To do Margaret full justice, she would not knowingly have accepted happiness at the expense of her younger sister, but she had dismissed the words of the seeress as fantastic vaporings unworthy of consideration. Clare, however, had been deeply impressed; she spent hours pondering on them. If her death would purchase Margaret's happiness, the lame girl was ready to surrender it. She did not put into words her secret thought, that Margaret's happiness was also the happiness of Ned Wentworth.

Time flew. Margaret's wedding was so near at hand that when Clare looked at the calendar on the wall of their room, she found but a single day remaining before the older sister would leave her home for the new life that spread with so much rich promise before her. Day by day Clare had prayed fervently for strength to resist any fresh attacks upon her psychic forces by the entity which she knew as Clifford Bentley. Once or twice Clare, now watchful and alert, had felt the certain indications of Clifford's presence; the failing of her vital powers that preceded the entrance of the spirit-lover so convincingly, if invisibly, into the material world. As yet she had been able to fight him off, and this gave her confidence in her ability to save her sister from the annoyance, if nothing more, that Clifford's influence might bring to bear upon either Margaret or Ned.

The night before the wedding Ned did not drop in as he had expected; he telephoned to Margaret that he was not feeling quite himself but would undoubtedly be all right in the morning. His words were mild in comparison to what he was experiencing. For several days he had

been fighting off an obsession even worse than the mild one that had overcome him on the night of his engagement to Margaret. He had not dared be off his guard for a moment. As surely as he permitted his thoughts to wander ever so slightly, he felt them getting beyond his control, until his head would be awhirl with incoherencies and strange conjectures that tormented him cruelly.

He began to "remember" incidents that concerned Margaret, but in which he figured as a principal; incidents in which he knew at the same time that he had never taken part. One time he found himself saying aloud with persistence, "I am Clifford Bentley! I am Clifford Bentley!" until he caught himself up with what was almost terror clutching at his heart.

Intuition told him that Clifford Bentley must be the rival now making such desperate efforts to cause trouble between Margaret and himself. Ned swore that he would not give her up, no matter what the cost of keeping her might be. As his determination on this point increased, so did the insidious attacks upon his mental stronghold by the invisible rival.

The night before his wedding Ned had come to the point where he was half dead for want of sleep. His apprehensions had grown so strong that he had been keeping himself awake night after night with strong coffee, fearing to relax his guard for a single moment. That night he could hold out no longer; he was obliged to give way to sleep for a few hours; flesh and blood could stand no more.

When he waked the next day, he found to his consternation that he had overslept. It was already noon, and as the wedding was set for 3 o'clock, he had no more time than was absolutely necessary to dress and motor out to Dr. Sloane's. He paid little or no attention to a dull ache in his head, and a tingling, pricking sensation that occasionally shot through his body; if he thought of it at all, it was as the natural result of his sleeplessness for several nights, and the consequent nervous strain. Certain it is that he did not think of it as having any connection with Clifford Bentley.

The wedding was to be a very quiet one, the only outside person present being Father Rooney. Margaret was to be unattended. Had she chosen a bridesmaid, it would have been Clare, but the lame girl insisted that her crutches would have made a distressingly inharmonious appearance. The bride came into the room on her father's arm, the old doctor having managed to brace up sufficiently to go through the short ceremony of giving his daughter away.

Near the officiating clergyman, who had been placed near the window opening on the garden, stood the bridegroom. Ned also was unattended; he had decided that he was fully able to take care of Margaret's wedding ring without any outside assistance. As his bride approached, the young man turned his head toward her. A sudden horror and dismay seized upon him. As he looked, he became aware that, strangely enough, his emotions were so complex as to convince him, without a struggle, that *he was at once himself and that other!* In vain he fought against that terrible obsession; he could do nothing to drive out the triumphant rival who had entered his mind, his body. In despair he cast down his eyes, dreading lest others might read in them the strange and awful thing that had befallen him.

Margaret approached, her head bent, her eyes on the flowers she carried. The clergyman began to read from his prayer-book. Ned could feel the gentle presence of the girl he loved, as she paused beside him. When

the clergyman addressed the question to Ned that would bind him to her, it seemed to him that the intruding personality was laughing at him as it whipped the replies out of his very mouth, responding with a decisive abruptness that caused the minister to send a quick glance at the brusk bridegroom. Ned was praying for the ceremony to close.

The minister addressed the bride: "Wilt thou take this man to be thy wedded husband . . .?"

Wentworth's heart pumped madly. In a moment it would be over. A silence succeeded to the clergyman's question, a silence that endured—that weighed down every heart. Ned lifted his head and sought Margaret's eyes in astonishment.

She was looking at him, horror on her amazed face. The flowers she was carrying fell tumbling at her feet from relaxed fingers. She took an instinctive step backward and put one hand behind her gropingly, as though seeking support. Still she stared at him incredulously. The clergyman, not understanding, prompted her in an undertone. With a sharp anguish that cut the young lover's heart, her voice rang out wildly.

"No—no—no!" she screamed, and sank back unconscious into the arms of her father.

8

CONSTERNATION on every face. Clare had dropped hers into both hands, and was sobbing and praying behind that frail shield. Dr. Sloane stood, holding his fainting daughter as if he had been turned into stone and unable to move. The clergyman had closed his prayer-book and gazed in bewilderment at the fainting bride and the agonized, astounded groom.

Only Father Rooney grasped the situation even faintly. He it was who relieved the old doctor of his burden and carried Margaret to the divan. It was he who motioned everyone but the young lover from the room. He held salts to the girl's nostrils, while he questioned Ned with a single look of sympathetic inquiry.

"I don't know! That's the worst of it, I don't know," Ned groaned miserably. "Father, I haven't been quite myself since the night we became engaged. Do you suppose—she could have—felt the difference? I can imagine nothing else that would have turned her against me so suddenly and incomprehensibly."

"Do you mean, my poor boy, that you have felt that invisible presence again? That—that it has become an obsession?"

"Exactly. I have fought it for days. But last night—I had lost so much sleep," apologetically, "I could not keep awake. That was *its* chance, I suppose. This morning I have been feeling strange, when I come to think of it." Hurriedly Ned recounted his experiences with the invisible rival who had taken possession of his very self that afternoon, replying to the minister's questions through the lips of the obsessed.

The old priest nodded his head wisely. "I think I understand, my son. It is a strange condition, and a difficult one. I hardly know what to advise you."

Ned stood looking down at the unconscious girl, his eyes melancholy. "I can only fight until I can go on with it no longer," he said despairingly. "But how am I to continue fighting with an invisible entity that takes advantage of me in my unguarded moments of sleep?"

"Do you feel the presence at this moment?" demanded Father Rooney.

"N-no, I think not. That is," correcting himself, "I feel that it is somewhere near, but not controlling me for the time being."

Father Rooney hastily crossed himself. "For the time being, Ned, there is nothing for you to do but to keep away from Margaret. Whatever

this unknown entity is, its interest seems to be in keeping you two apart. Until you feel yourself complete master of the situation, it will be best for you to leave Margaret alone."

"I feel that strongly, but—it will be very hard, Father."

"Would you bring worse upon the woman you love?" said the priest gravely. "Believe me, my son, this matter will have to be solved by other power than yours or mine. I am persuaded, however, that your wisest course now will be to leave Margaret."

The young man bent, pressed a tender kiss upon the forehead of the girl who was to have been his wife, and went sadly from the room. Dr. Sloane and Clare were waiting for him in the hall; their anxious eyes questioned him.

"The marriage must be postponed. And Father Rooney feels that it will be wiser for me not to be here when Margaret comes out of her faint. I'll telephone later to learn how our dear girl is getting along."

Dr. Sloane patted his shoulder. "Cheer up, Ned. I think it's nothing more than the result of nervous strain. Wedding preparations have been too much for Margie. But I certainly never would have thought she'd keel over like that; she's so athletic and in such fine condition. Well, she'll be all right in a couple of days, and then we'll have you two tied up in a jiffy and off on your honeymoon."

Clare, who knew only too well what must be the root of the trouble, although she could not know the exact circumstances, dared not meet Ned's eyes, so disturbed was she. "I shall be praying for you, Ned," she whispered timidly, as she slipped away to assist the good priest in his ministrations.

Margaret revived presently and sat up, controlling herself with a strong effort. "I want to be alone, please," she said. "Clare, I don't mind you, of course." Her eyes dropped down upon her traveling gown. "I must take off these things," she said sadly.

As she rose to leave the room, her self-control gave way; tears gushed from her eyes, blinding her until she had to lean against the lame girl for guidance.

"Oh, it is cruel!" she sobbed. "What have we done to deserve this persecution? Tell Ned, Dad, that it isn't his fault, but I can't explain just now. I hope—I hope he will forgive me."

The girls went to their room, their tears mingling.

The day wore away. Ned telephoned in and received Margaret's message, to which she had added that it was her conviction their marriage could never take place, but that she would always love him—a message that half maddened the unhappy young man.

The sisters retired early, although there was no sleep for either of them for hours. Clare won her sister's confidence at last; Margaret confided to her the reason for the "no" that should have been "yes." Ned's obsession by the determined spirit of Clifford Bentley had been so plainly discernible by the girl that she had refused to marry him, because she felt it would not have been Ned she was marrying, but the intruding personality of that long-dead childhood sweetheart. The horror of the situation had been too much for her self-control. The bizarre idea of becoming the wife of two men in one body had forced from her that decisive, agonized negative.

Clare calmed her as best she might, both girls prayed together, and about half past 11 they fell asleep, exhausted by their emotions.

It was, as the girls ascertained afterward, shortly after midnight that Margaret awoke from troubled dreams. The room was in partial darkness. As she shook off her drow-

siness, she became aware of arms about her, and a face that pressed close against her own. The thought flashed through her gratefully that her sister had been watching and praying over her; she turned her lips to meet those others that sought hers.

The kiss undeceived her; *that was no sister's kiss!*

With convulsive nervous force Margaret drew herself away from the arms that had been holding her and sat up in bed, half dazed. For an instant she imagined that the events of the afternoon had been a dream, and that it was the kiss of her young husband that had just been pressed upon her lips. And then she knew that it was no dream.

The soft light of the night lamp fell upon the face of a young man, a complete stranger, who in his turn rose from the kneeling posture he had been maintaining by the side of her bed. Although she had never seen that face as an adult face, the terrified girl knew intuitively that she was looking upon the features of Clifford Bentley, who had succeeded at last in making himself visible and tangible.

She felt her senses slipping weakly from her control. She was convinced that this would be fatal, as she had not the slightest confidence in the kindly intentions of that dread lover from the unknown world. With all her might she gripped at courage, and stared that dead-alive entity squarely in the deep eyes that burned passionately upon her with a significance that froze the coursing blood in her veins; Margaret Sloane was no coward, but she had never shaken and trembled as she did that night, in the throes of an unearthly fear.

"What do you want?" she managed to whisper through dry lips.

"You!"

"Why do you come back to torment me? That was a child's silly promise—you can not hold me to it."

"I can—and will!" The apparition, doubly terrible because of its tangibility, moved toward her.

"No—no!" She thrust out protesting hands wildly. "Don't come nearer! If you do, I shall scream! I can not bear it!"

Clifford Bentley leaned toward her, smiling with white teeth showing between red lips, and regarding the shrinking, horrified girl meaningly. "You fear me—yet you have tasted my warm kisses," he whispered. "Do you think my rival will want you now, silly Margie?"

Margaret's brain began to whirl. Surmises too dreadful to shape into words prodded her mind sharply. She threw herself desperately from the bed, anywhere, away from that triumphantly smiling face, and began to scream.

Shriek after shriek rang through the startled house.

The figure of Clifford Bentley retired around the foot of Margaret's bed and approached that of Clare. Before the older sister's staring, incredulous eyes he leaned over the sleeping girl—and the next instant he had disappeared, like a dissipating vapor, from her sight.

II

The screams of his older daughter brought the doctor stumbling from his room across the hall. He entered abruptly to find Margaret on the floor in a dead faint, and Clare sitting up in bed rubbing her eyes, apparently half dazed. Inquiry failed to elicit anything further than that Margaret had had a nightmare which had so terrified her that she had sprung from bed to fall unconscious on the floor.

After she had been revived and tucked into bed again, and her father had left the girls alone, Clare made her sister tell the whole unbelievable story, while both glanced fearfully over their shoulders into the dim shadows of the room. As Margaret

finished, her voice broken with sobs, her eyes wide with her unspoken fears, the lame girl exclaimed with indignation, "He is cruel, Margie, and a coward, to behave like this."

"I can't help being terribly afraid. Who can tell how far his power will carry him?" confessed the half-hysterical Margaret.

Clare was silent. She, too, was afraid. More, she was remembering with poignant emotion the last words the seeress had spoken to her. The lame girl pressed both hands tightly against her laboring heart, that beat so painfully in her bosom. Gladly she would have stilled its beating, could she have known surely that the act would purchase immunity for Margaret and happiness for Ned.

"Margie, the first thing we must do in the morning is to see Mrs. Campbell," she said at last. "She can help us if anyone can. Don't try to dissuade me, dear; you must admit that even a forlorn hope is worth snatching at, now."

Margaret had so far lost her former high spirits and self-confidence that she would have assented willingly to whatever plans Clare might have proposed. Still, she could not help questioning Mrs. Campbell's ability to find a way out of the terrible and tortuous maze in which she and Ned seemed lost.

"Do you really believe there is anything extraordinary about Laura Campbell's trances, Clare?" she asked earnestly. "I've always wondered at the loss of dignity such feigning costs her."

"She really has what they call second-sight, Margie. I've seen her myself, in trances. Not often, because Mr. Campbell hates to have her give way to them. But the day we were in the garden and I had that heart attack—you remember?—she spoke with the voice of a man, and—I knew, somehow, that it was *he*." Her own tones were modified as she spoke, and she glanced timorously about her.

"Well," conceded Margaret unhappily, "I suppose we ought to do everything we can—and if she is able to help us, I know Mr. Campbell will let her. But I can't help being skeptical; it all seems so foolish and childish to me. Of course, if you want me to I'll run over and ask her if she can help us out."

"Oh, Margie, if you only would!" urged Clare earnestly.

Margaret accordingly went across the road to their Scotch neighbor's home, and related to Laura Campbell the story of the "nightmare" she had had the previous night. The quiet-faced woman listened in grim silence, a non-committal expression on her round, motherly countenance. Only the continuous snapping of the catch of the chatelaine betrayed her nervousness.

"You'll have to make up a circle and hold a seance and call him," she said with finality.

"I don't see why," shrank the girl.

"You don't see why? You foolish girl, you make me lose all patience with you!"

"But——"

"'But' nothing!" snapped the Scotchwoman with asperity. "You are an ungrateful girl, Margaret Sloane. And a blindly selfish one, too, if you want my frank opinion. Your sister Clare is being slowly killed, all her vital forces are being drawn out of her by that — that male vampire — that satellite of your attractions. And you — you draw back at the only chance to make terms with him! I'm sure I don't know what you can be thinking of."

Margaret's color was running high. "I had no idea that my sister was in danger of any kind," she retorted spiritedly. "But the mere suggestion of such a thing is sufficient to make me agree to any plan, no matter how idiotic it may appear. Will you un-

dertake to conduct a seance for us?" abruptly.

"Have someone telephone your fiancé to be at your home this evening at 8 o'clock. See that arrangements are made so that we can have the entire evening undisturbed by visitors. I will be over as soon as Mr. Campbell has gone to his lodge; it's fortunate tonight is lodge night, or you'd have to wait. My husband would not give me his permission to act as medium at your seance, so I've got to do it behind his back. And I can assure you, Margaret Sloane, that isn't a pleasant thing for me to do."

Margaret, confronted with the possibility that her neighbor might repent her offer, was transformed from scorner to suppliant. Her eyes pleaded eloquently.

"Get along with you, Margaret," snorted the Scotchwoman with feigned indignation. "Asking me to deceive my good Douglas, are you? There, there, don't worry, my dear. Laura Campbell has never yet turned her back on anyone who really needed her help. I'll be over at 8 o'clock."

Margaret did not feel up to talking directly with Ned, and begged Clare to telephone for her. Ned was in his rooms, happily, and almost out of his head with joy at hearing that a possible solution of the weird problem might be reached so soon. He promised to be at Dr. Sloane's at the appointed hour.

CLARE was sitting on the porch that evening at about half past 7, when she saw the bowed figure of Father Rooney approaching through the dusk. He came up slowly, and seated himself on the top step, fanning himself with his broad-brimmed hat, for the day had been a hot one.

"I don't know that you'll want to stay this evening, Father," the lame girl said to him timidly. "Father won't be free to play chess with you tonight. You see, we're going to do something of which you won't approve — we're going to hold a seance, to see if we can't learn how to get out of the strange situation in which we seem to have been thrown."

Father Rooney stopped fanning himself. His hat half hid his face from the girl, as he looked sharply at her over its wide brim. There was an anxious note in his voice.

"A seance, my daughter? Is your father permitting it? Does he consider it a wise thing for — well, Clare, for you, my child? I'm speaking not only as a priest, but from the physician's standpoint."

Clare returned his grave query with a serene smile. "Oh, I don't believe it can do me any harm," she said thoughtfully. "Do you suppose anything could hurt me more than to believe that some malicious spirit is robbing me daily of strength in order to torment my poor sister? Besides, I'd rather risk a—a heart attack, Father, than continue to go through what I've been suffering for weeks."

Father Rooney sighed. Too well he knew the self-sacrifice that was the dominant note in Clare's nature.

"I can not attend such a meeting, my child, as you know. But — I think I shall remain. I can pray for you and yours — it may well be that God sent me here for just that tonight — when you may need spiritual help more than ever in your lives before."

He rose to greet the doctor and Ned, who had been walking in the grounds.

Ned had not entered the house as yet, fearing a repetition of the terrible scene that had taken place on the ill-fated day of the wedding. For although he had been feeling himself almost entirely free from his obsession since he had kept away from Margaret, how could he know when it might return in force?

"Coming in?" he asked the priest

"I will sit out here," observed Father Rooney. "Here I can watch the stars."

Mrs. Campbell came up the bricked path at this juncture, and the whole party, with the exception of the good priest, went indoors.

Margaret was sitting on the divan in the front room. As Ned entered, she rose to her feet and put out both hands, while tears sprang to her eyes and rolled piteously down her cheeks.

"My poor Ned, can you ever forgive me?" she murmured brokenly.

"There is nothing to forgive," he whispered. "Oh, Margie, let us hope that tonight may open a way for us out of the tangle that seems to have been made of our happiness."

Mrs. Campbell interposed, with her usual bruskness.

"Better for you to keep your exchanges of affection for a later moment," she said decidedly. "I sympathize with you, but every moment you are enraging yet more the entity who has proved powerful enough to have made a fine tangle of your affairs. Dr. Sloane, will you and Mr. Wentworth arrange the chairs so that we can sit in a circle?"

She busied herself with the preliminary arrangements for the seance, her every movement followed closely by the lame girl.

Clare sat apart from the rest, hands folded tightly in her lap, eyes dark with melancholy. When everything had been arranged to her satisfaction, the Scotchwoman indicated to each their places in the circle. She seated Ned at her left, Clare at her right; Dr. Sloane sat on the other side of the lame girl, and Margaret—half glad, half afraid — between lover and father.

The lights were turned out. Only a small night lamp, its tiny wick floating on the oil, stood upon the table at the other end of the room. In that flickering and barely discernible light, the faces of the sitters flashed into and out of sight at every draft of air that floated in at the garden window.

The seeress, tense and watchful, maintained her hold on Clare's hand with gentle force. She felt the lame girl sink back in her chair limply, with a kind of half-sob, half-sigh. The doctor spoke in hushed tones.

"I'm afraid Clare is fainting," he worried.

"I guarantee that she is all right for the time being," replied the psychic quickly. "She has slipped off into a trance. Do not try to waken her. It is better so. I shall direct, instead of becoming the medium myself, for Clare is to be our medium tonight. Now we shall be able to see and talk with Mr. Clifford Bentley."

Hardly had the words left her lips before Margaret, holding tightly to the hands of father and lover, gave a sharp exclamation.

Standing directly behind Clare's chair was the figure of Clifford Bentley, his white face and burning eyes fixed upon the unhappy bride with passionate intensity.

10

Ned spoke impulsively, half rising as he cried out, "You miserable scoundrel!" His eyes flashed angrily.

Mrs. Campbell maintained her grip on his hand and drew him down firmly. "Sit down, Mr. Wentworth. This is no time to call names." She addressed the newcomer with cold courtesy. "I see that you have anticipated our wishes. We are here tonight especially to talk with you."

"I know — I know," muttered the newcomer fiercely. "I understood that you intended to meddle, and I came before I was called, of my own accord. Otherwise you would have had the mortification of not seeing

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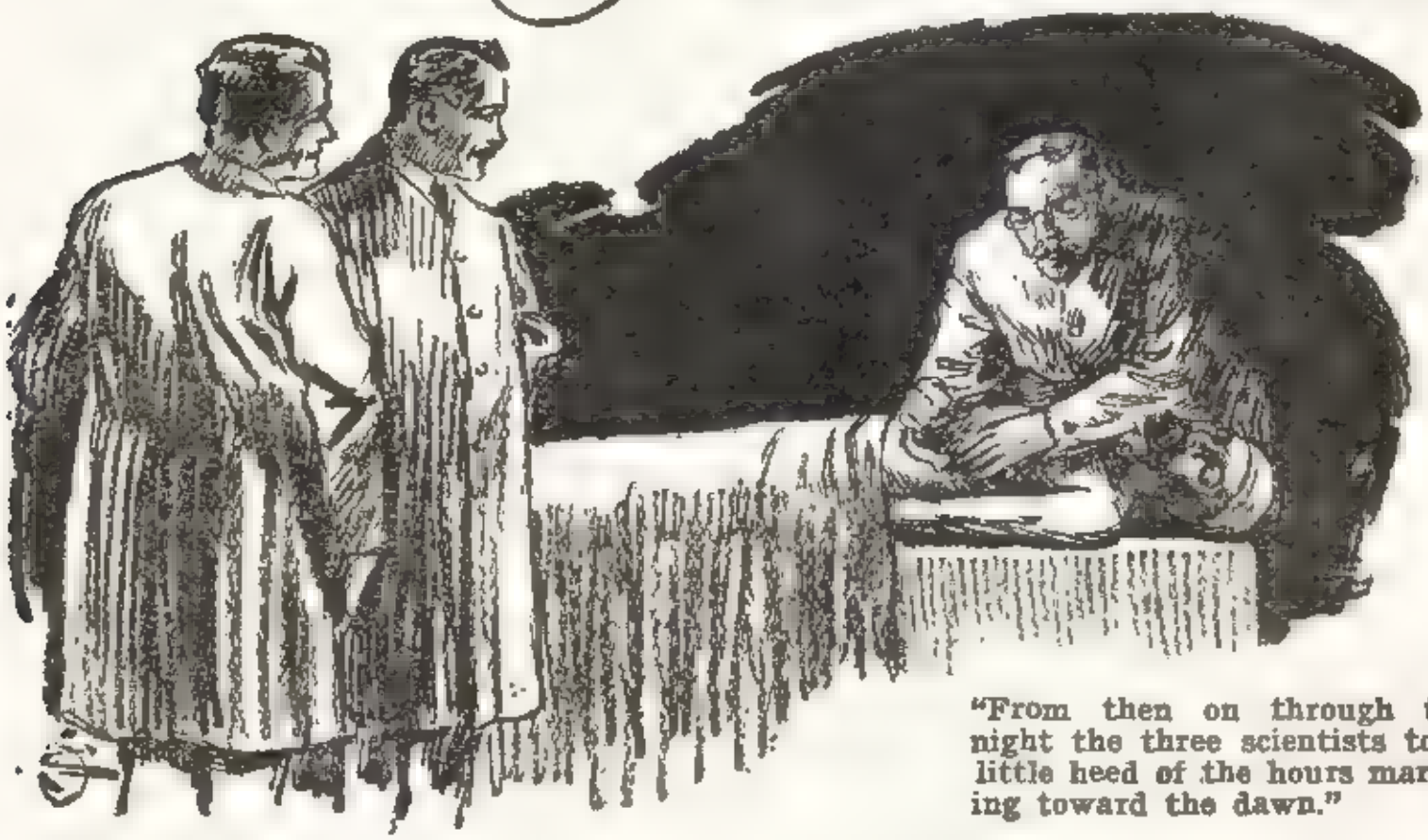
THE DARK CHRYSALIS

by ELI COLTER



"From then on through the night the three scientists took little heed of the hours marching toward the dawn."

SAUL BLAUVETTE was, as he himself styled it, a bug-chaser from his earliest childhood. Always frail, diminutive of stature, he possessed a large head and an emaciated, colorless face into which were set enormous slate-gray eyes. The prodigious energy with which he had been endowed betrayed itself in every quick impulsive move of his thin, eagerly alive body, but was forever most evident in the enormous unwinking eyes. From the hour he began creeping he was claimed by and devoted to that science which most fittingly dovetailed into his weirdly abnormal life. The science of bugs. Anything that crawled, wriggled, swam or flew, and was no larger than a tree-toad, arrested his immediate attention and invited his initial efforts at vivisection and investigation. Before he was out of grammar school his absorption centered on smaller objects of animal life, and ever smaller. The ultimate focus of his ambition was inevitable.

At school his playmates shrank from him and shunned him. He was dubbed "queer," the word that is anathema and taboo to the average person of normal tastes, pursuits and desires. Carrying within him the hot white flame of genius, he, like all geniuses, paid the heavy price for that genius and walked alone. His father laughed at his nonsense, predicted that he'd get over it, and let it go at that. He was still laughing at it when he died the day before the frail boy's tenth birthday. But Saul's mother, a somber silent woman hag-ridden by a secret horror, watched

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For information upon which to base this story, and for inspiration to build the character of Saul Blauvette, my thanks are due to Paul De Kruif, author of *Microbe Hunters*.

ELI COLTER.

her son covertly and wondered what star was set in his forehead. She made no mistake, she knew the star was there. She knew he had been born for great things and that his father's laughter had never touched him; though it had whetted her own sharp belief, allayed the sting of her nagging fears as a counter-irritant dulls the pain in a running sore. She stared into Saul's enormous eyes, and believed.

When he graduated from grammar school, delicate, erratic, shunned and queer, and told her that he wanted to take a course in chemistry and bacteriology, she spent all her small income and what remained of his father's savings to see him through. She flaunted her belief, in a silence that he penetrated and for which he was grateful, and for which he gave her silence in return. She gave him all she had, not yet dreaming the way his feet should go. When he had finished his course, she sold three-quarters of the land his father had left them, took the proceeds and helped him build a great barn of a laboratory in an isolated grove in the center of their remaining ten acres. Next to the laboratory they set up a four-roomed house to serve as living quarters.

At the age of twenty-five Saul Blauvette had developed into a nervous pocket-edition of a man bursting with energy; an obscure bug-chaser who spent his time pottering over several tables in his barn of a laboratory, fussing with numberless bottles and flasks filled with microbes of every description, flitting back and forth between two precious, powerful microscopes — the most powerful obtainable. His mother, a full head taller than he, shifted silently like a gaunt shadow from room to room of the adjoining living building, sometimes drifting into the laboratory, respectfully watching her strange changeling with wondering eyes, waiting for the star in his forehead to take shape and shine. Saul worshiped her in silence.

He gave little thought to any other human being. For a time. Then he began to think intensely of *all* human beings. The star began to take shape. In the beginning his interest in microbes had been born of, incited and urged by a curiosity that craved cognizance of all minute forms of life. But along with the fascinating studies of chemistry and bacteriology he had learned the names of Pasteur, Koch and all that royal vanguard of adventurers. He had seen the record of service accomplished for mankind, service rendered by men who fought hideous forms of disease to free the world from horrible menace. And into the very huge heart that pumped and thumped in Saul Blauvette's very small body there was born a mighty longing to go onward in the footsteps of those other valiant men of science, to follow in the wake of those who had achieved triumph in battle with horror and death. His mother, looking into the enormous slate-gray eyes, saw the swift rising glow of that inner genius-torch and knew that the star in his forehead had begun to shine.

Among the few who had not shunned him, who had looked through the all but repellent crust surrounding him and seen the potentialities of the man inside, was old Doc Whittly, their family physician for twenty years. In Whittly's unchanging attitude of cordial friendliness, in his atmosphere of unspoken understanding, Saul sensed the existence of an ally waiting only the moment of emergency and need to reveal itself. When the star began to shine and Saul found himself at the crossways, his feet stayed for lack of definitive knowledge concerning the horrors that rode the world, he went to old Doc Whittly.

It was an epochal conversation that ensued. It was the beginning of a magnificent dream, a ghastly pursuit leading down a gruesome trail. It was born in words: couched in Saul's comical polyglot of idealistic English, modern slang and peppery curse-words, and in the doctor's slow dignified technism.

"I'm going after microbes in earnest, Doc," Saul announced, bustling into Whittly's office and sitting down gingerly on the edge of a chair, with the air of a man holding himself in readiness to spring to his feet, fearful that the chair underneath him might suddenly give way. He peered at the doctor with his huge and solemn eyes as he began firing a series of questions. "What disease most menaces the world today? What disease entails more pain, horror and fear than any other? What disease could I attack and conquer by which I would render the greatest service to society at large? What disease causes more hell than all the rest put together?"

"Cancer." Whittly's answer was instantaneous. He held his silence for a moment, studying Saul intently, as might a man facing something he has long expected, yet taken unawares; remembering the length of the young scientist's lonely, queerly-assorted life. He recalled the things he secretly had predicted Saul might some day accomplish, as he added slowly: "In my opinion cancer is the biggest menace that exists today, for a number of reasons. But it isn't caused by microbes of any sort—so that lets you out."

"So?" Saul moved restlessly on the edge of his chair. "What does cause it, then?"

"Nobody knows." Whittly shook his head. "Men have been speculating on that question for two thousand years, and have been actively trying to determine the answer for over a hundred years."

"Well, if you don't know what causes it, how do you know it isn't microbes?" Saul demanded.

"It just isn't." Whittly smiled slightly at Saul's retort. "There are no microbes about it. Better men than you and I have determined that, Saul."

"I don't believe it." Saul slid back an inch on his chair and ruffled his lank dun-colored hair with nervous fingers. "I believe all disease is caused by microbes, without exception. But I've never studied diseases much. All I've studied is bugs. And I got to reading about those marvelous fellows who went gunning for disease, just because they got started fiddling with bugs—like me. They were genius-men, Doc!"

"They were!" Whittly agreed. "They certainly were! The saga of the microbe-hunters is a great saga!"

"You bet your sweet life!" Saul moved out perilously near the edge of his chair, aflame with enthusiasm, his bursting energy evidencing itself in drumming fingers that could not lie still. He broke into a torrent of excited, eulogistic speech that brought a look half of amusement, half of astonishment, to Whittly's face. "It's like a fairy-tale. It started away back in the Seventeenth Century when crazy old Antony Leeuwenhoek was born in Delft, Holland. He was the first of them. He took the first step on the glory trail for the saving of mankind—by bugs! He made the first complicated lenses and microscopes. How he loved 'em! But Pasteur was the real explorer, the real vanguard, though others went before him."

"Yes, you're right. He was." Whittly nodded, his eyes deep and brooding.

"You're damn tootin' I'm right!" Saul bounced to his feet and began pacing back and forth in front of the doctor. "Look at what he started! Look at the men who trailed after

him. God Almighty, what a crew! Check 'em up! Koch knocked cholera for a goal and handed T. B. an awful wallop. Half-paralyzed, Pasteur slugged hydrophobia right in the face. Behring and Roux knocked diphtheria cold, with Loeffler to lead them on. Yersin crocked the black death. Dave Bruce showed the sleeping sickness where to get off. Ross and Grassi solved the malaria mystery. Walter Reed swatted the yellow fever. Jenner showed smallpox the way out. Ehrlich tried *six hundred and six* formulas before he found the one to tame syphilis. *And all with bugs!* Lord, what a crew!"

"Yes," Whittly agreed softly. "Yes!"

"People haven't an even break, Doc!" Saul paused in front of the elder man and leaned toward him with fanatical eyes. "The water they drink, the food they eat, even the air they breathe is full of invisible microbes, swimming and wriggling and floating around, just waiting to get into somebody and kill him off. I—listen! I read about that woman who brought her boy to Pasteur—the first human being into whom Pasteur ever injected his serum, you know. And the boy was bitten in fourteen places by a mad dog, and the other doctors said he had to die horribly. But Pasteur was brave enough to take the chance. He shot his hydrophobia serum into him—and the kid wasn't even sick! I read that, I tell you, and I—cried. Don't you *dare* laugh!"

"I'm not," Whittly denied, looking away; "so—so did I."

"Well, don't you see?" Saul threw himself into the chair he had vacated, drawing it close, facing Whittly. "I've got to do something for people. What good does it accomplish for me to go studying all about microbes and experimenting with them unless I do something for people? Unless I give them escape?"

"Escape?" Whittly frowned, puzzled.

"Exactly! To me, Doc, the only men who were ever great were those men who gave the people of the world just one thing—*escape!* I don't care how the world labels him, no man was ever great to me unless he gave the people escape. And the *quality* of his greatness is measured by the *quantity* of his contribution. Think it over."

"Escape!" Whittly repeated, staring into the enormous slate-gray eyes, held by their flaring light. "You've got some funny ideas, Saul!"

"I don't give a rap how funny they are, so long as they are ideas—*and have an L tacked onto the end of them!*" Saul jumped to his feet and began pacing again, waving his arms and talking so swiftly that his words tumbled over his tongue in their eagerness to get themselves said. "Every man or woman who ever gave the world the least avenue of escape had his or her share of greatness. Why, look! Even Henry Ford—he gave the people a cheap car, and thereby many a day of beauty and rest and change they'd never have had but for him. He gave them escape from the bondage of monotony, and that makes him great."

"Henry Ford!" Whittly ejaculated. "Saul, you *are* crazy!"

"Thanks. I'd hate to be sane!" Saul made a sweeping gesture. "If I'm crazy I'm in magnificent company! I'm with the fellows who gave the world escape! Take the great and sift them down. Shakespeare and Masefield give the people escape from ugliness. Fritz Kreisler and Beethoven give them escape from the terrible silence of their own thoughts. Such as Anatole France give them escape from pettiness. Christ gives them escape from dread of that futile, impotent thing—six feet of dirt and the last handful of dust. Have you noticed that big Corot in

my dirty laboratory? He gives men escape from environment. Every day I walk the bank of that peace-swept river. Yet these eyes shall never see any such river—only the one Corot gave me. And Pasteur—Pasteur gives them escape from fear! What's finer than to give them escape from fear?"

"Nothing," Whittly answered slowly, staring into Saul's face. "Nothing. I really suspect that giving them escape from anything is rather beautiful."

Saul's great eyes blazed. "You give a human being escape from the fears that hem him in," he said, "and he'll go a mighty long way!" He wheeled and strode across the room, standing over the old doctor. "All I know is bugs. What I do I've got to do with bugs. And some of them are so unbelievably microscopic that you can hardly find them with the most powerful lens. I want to do what Pasteur did! I want to fight bugs with bugs and give my people escape from fear!"

"*Your* people?" Whittly started. "*Your* people?"

"Aye, *my* people!" Suddenly Saul straightened and stood very still. His flaming eyes were black with the brooding stare of a man who stares into eternity. His voice dropped from its high cry, caught and hung on a somber throbbing note, like a fathomless pulse of melody. "*My people!* What did Kipling say? 'The people, Lord, Thy people, are good enough for me.' That's me. My people. All the people. I make no discriminations. The brave, the bad, the brilliant, the brainless. Just people. Just humans. Humans hurting, and wanting, and striving, and fearing. *My* people! Doc—tell me this!" Saul again threw himself into the chair facing Whittly, his eyes smoldering, and his voice rose in eager demand. "Are people *afraid* of cancer?"

"Are they afraid of it? Lord, man, I'd say you didn't know much about disease!" Whittly roused, alive with his own long interest in that subject. "Look here, Saul. I'll show you just how afraid they are! There are certain definite conditions *known* to precede cancer, it's always possible to apprehend it, and taken in its early stages nine times out of ten it's curable. But people are appallingly ignorant about it; they are too frightened over it to investigate, to ascertain its action and learn to watch for the danger signals. They think cancer is equivalent to a death sentence. They won't even go to a doctor at the appearance of the first signs—they're afraid he'll say it's cancer. And they shiver in fear, and hug their horror to their hearts, till it's too late—and they die. And the world continues to consider it a death sentence, and the fear grows. If we could only educate them to understand—to be wise and understand and take it in time——"

"You never can," Saul cut in curtly. "There will always be a majority of minds too lacking in the fine points of intelligence to realize the value of early diagnosis. There will always be thousands and tens of thousands you can't possibly educate to that standard. But those thousands can get cancer and shiver in fear and suffer and die and——"

"That's just the trouble!" Whittly interrupted excitedly. "They're crazed with fear over it! Bound up in fear——"

"*The dark chrysalis!*" Saul cried, his slate-gray eyes black with sudden emotion. "The dark chrysalis! I've found it!"

"What are you talking about?" Whittly asked sharply.

"Fear." Saul leaned forward and looked somberly into the doctor's face. "Fear is the dark chrysalis. I wanted to find some disease that so wrapped the human race in fear that

they were like a pupa in a cocoon—helpless in their dark chrysalis."

"Well, you've found it, all right," Whittly admitted grimly. He stared at Saul with new eyes: was the sapling man mad or genius? "If the human race was ever helplessly bound up in anything, it is helplessly bound up in its fear of cancer. And the only way it will ever come out of that fear is by a widespread campaign of instruction concerning the early stages——"

"You're wrong!" Saul interrupted. "What about the tens of thousands? No. Cancer itself has got to be conquered! And the medical profession will never do it alone. Some guy like me will meddle along, like Pasteur with his mad dogs, and stumble onto it as he stumbled onto the cure for hydrophobia. And I'm going to be that man! I've found my quest! There isn't anything in this world wreaks so enormous a havoc as fear. The dark chrysalis! And I'm going to break it open. I'm going to bring it out into the light!"

WHITTLY stared. Mad? Genius? By the grace of God, both. Saul sat back in his chair, abruptly cool, calculating, the man of science probing into dark places. The flaming light in his eyes and on his face sank to a cold, steady glow—the glow of the star in his forehead, which had begun to shine unwaveringly and should never cease. He began asking preconsidered, well-weighed questions, listening intently to the old doctor's concise, comprehensive answers. He began with this: "How many kinds of cancer are there?"

"Not many." Whittly breathed a sigh of relief. This cool atmosphere of technical investigation suited him better. He had been bewildered, shaken by Saul's tense wildness. Now he gave his whole attention to the business of answering the seeker after knowledge as lucidly and tersely as possible. "There are the *scirrhus* or hard cancer, the *encephaloid* or soft cancer, and the *epithelial*. The *scirrhus* has much fiber and not so many cells, grows slowly, spreads and ulcerates. Appears most often in breasts or internal organs. The *encephaloid* is just the opposite in structure, has many cells and less fiber. The things look like brains. That's what *encephaloid* means, anyway. That's the kind called acute cancer. Grows with astounding rapidity. Attacks most frequently internal organs and limbs. The *epithelial* is full of cells like the cells in your skin. Comes on the skin and mucous membranes—like your lip. What else can I tell you?"

"Does it get one sex more than the other? What ages suffer from it most?"

"It kills far more women than men," Whittly replied, stifling a sigh. "Men know it most in internal organs—stomach, liver, intestines—after that lip and tongue. Women it most often attacks in the breast, and in less degree in the same organs in which it attacks men. It's the disease of age. People from 65 to 75 are ten times more susceptible than those from 35 to 45."

"That's the worst thing you've said yet!" Saul cut in. "Women have enough to suffer. Trite—but true. And taking people off just when they've begun to learn how to live. Another angle there. To help the old live on! But give me something more definitive, Doc. Don't you know *anything* about it? How it works, for instance?"

"Oh, we know how it works, right enough!" Whittly nodded grimly. "It's some kind of tumorous growth: a lot of little cells massed together in a kind of milky juice we call cancer juice. It's all chugged up together in a pretty dense fibrous framework. Doesn't have any well-defined limits. Just starts and grows and eats up all

the textures in its vicinity. Spreads by the lymphatics and the veins. And the cells that multiply so *ab*-normally are apparently *normal* cells. That's the baffling thing."

"Well, what are those cells? What makes them act that way?"

"Yes! You tell us!" Whittly's laugh was good-naturedly ironic. "That's what you're going to find out, I believe. Nobody knows, man!"

"But haven't they worked out any theories?" Saul's cool, analytical mind probed on, ignoring the doctor's jeer.

"Theories!" Whittly snorted. "Theories, hypotheses, suppositions and deductions! That's all they have accomplished. They've exhausted every idea you could possibly advance—and they've got nowhere. It isn't hereditary. It isn't contagious. Neither believed so nor proven so. It isn't a blood disease. That's the damnable thing about it. They don't know what it is! They only know that something malignant, corroding, putrefying, gets into that bunch of cells and eats, eats, eats into the living flesh. Saul, did you ever see anyone with cancer?" It was Whittly who was getting excited now. He sat erect, his eyes alive with the hideous thing he was visioning.

"No." Saul shook his head, leaning toward the old doctor, electrified by a thrill of repulsion at something in Whittly's tone. "I never did. It must be ghastly."

"Ghastly! It's horrible! Think of it, man! A creeping menace we can't define, of which we can't determine the origin, fastening itself on a human body, in human vital organs, eating into the living flesh, making of a living, breathing body a loathsome, stinking, putrefying abomination! And we can't stop it! Everything we've ever tried is helpless before its insidious, crawling erosion. X-ray and radium have been known to benefit and even cure isolated cases. Yet the X-ray failed. Acted crazily. Benefited some cases, aggravated others. Too experimental and risky at best. Radium isn't proved of any particular use yet. Little to work with in the first place, too few know how to use it skilfully, its value is yet undetermined. May never prove a real cure—only useful in treatment. There isn't any medicine that will cure it, that's sure! Oh, they've got up a lot of fake cures, pastes, poultices, drugs—and they manufacture testimonials for them by the carload lots. But they're all bunk, Saul! All we can do is cut it out—cut out the loathsome eating thing. But we've got to get it in time, or even that's futile. It comes back and starts eating somewhere else!"

"My God, what a gruesome picture you paint!" Saul said sharply.

"I don't paint it half as horrible as it is!" Whittly shuddered involuntarily. "Good God, man, if you'd seen them as I've seen them! There's your poor humans hurting—and wanting—and striving—and fearing! Crazed with fear! Begging you with insane eyes and breaking voices to save them when you'd give your right arm to and can't! And the disease grows appallingly! The latest statistics show an increase of about 2½ per cent more cases a year! Two and a half more per cent of people every year attacked by that malignant creeping death—stunned with fear, dying—no cure——"

"They'll never find the cure till they find the cause!" Saul interrupted, the light of the flaming star again blazing in his enormous eyes. "There's a microbe, I tell you!"

"Maybe," Whittly conceded, doubtfully. "God knows. No germ capable of causing cancer has ever been demonstrated. If you're right and there is one, that makes the picture all the more ghastly! To think that there may be some minute grisly,

bug in your flesh, and we can't find it—and it eats away the living tissue, eats till——"

A CHOKING gasp halted Whittly's almost frenzied speech, and both men turned quickly to see the doctor's office girl standing just inside the door, carrying to the cabinet by the wall some cleanly boiled instruments. Both Saul and Whittly had been so engrossed that they had failed to hear the door open. The girl had stood there in frozen silence, listening to Whittly's rising voice, till the horror of what he was saying wrung from her lips the gasp that had interrupted the doctor's speech.

Whittly caught himself into calmness and control, as the girl stammered an apology, "I—I beg your pardon. I just stepped into the room to return these——"

"No apology necessary, Helene. Mr. Blauvette and I just got talking pretty heatedly about my pet horror. This is Saul Blauvette—I've told you a lot about him. Miss Kinkaid, Saul. She's a new addition to my office. Just took her in last month. I've been telling you Saul would do something great with his bugs, some day, Helene. He—well, he's going to tackle cancer!"

"You're right I am!" Saul turned his enormous eyes upon the girl who stood still in the doorway, watching his face. She nodded an acknowledgment of the introduction, but Saul ignored it, blazing again with excitement. He sprang to his feet, ran his hand backward over his lank hair, and took a step toward the girl. "I'm going to find the microbe. I'm going to solve the mystery of those wildly erratic cells!"

"If you could solve that!" Helene's face paled, her eyes lit with the potential might of such a discovery. It flashed on Saul that there was no doubt of him in her exclamation. It was as though she had said, "For the saving of the world—a master has come!" And that strange man looked into her wide brown eyes and gave her his heart, his immeasurable capacity for glory, and his vehement allegiance. She believed! She looked back into his enormous eyes, and spoke again, under her breath. "Oh—if you could do that! Think what it would mean to the world!"

"I'm going to do it!" Saul's great eyes glowed as phosphorus glows in a pitch-black night. He leaned toward the girl and Whittly looked on dumfounded at the thing that flashed between the little scientist and Helene Kinkaid. "You've shown me the way. You believe in me, don't you? All I've got to do is believe in myself!"

"And God," Helene whispered. "Man does all things—through God."

"I don't know much about God." Saul's speech slowed. "I believe—but I guess I've just gotten away from Him, I've given my life to bugs. I've given my life to something else lately. To people—all my people. And now I've given my life to a third thing. To you! All that I am, or have, or ever hope to be—something to bring and lay in the palm of your hand, and say—'This is for you. I did this for you!' You've shown me the way. You believed! I shall give my people escape from fear of death and pain—and cancer! I'll find that microbe, and perfect some way of killing it!"

"You've certainly picked yourself a job, Saul," Whittly's voice cut in, striving to level the swirling atmosphere that caught him by the throat, striving to bring coolness by half-jesting words, to a sudden vibration of burning thought that shook the room, and him.

"That's what I want!" Saul retorted vehemently, wheeling to face

the doctor, raising clenched fists above his head. Whittly shook, dazed anew at the flame in the young scientist's face. And Saul blazed on: "I know what you think, Doc! You think I'm on the trail of an unattainable ideal! You're wrong. There isn't anything unattainable in the end! It's the pursuit of the unattainable ideal that leads us to the heights. Before—I might have failed, I might have lacked the last pound of incentive to drive me on. I can't fail now!" He stopped short, literally leaped across the room and snatched the girl's hands, instruments and all, leaning forward to gaze into her eyes, on a level with his own. "I've got her! See, Helene! For you I would go to the sun! For you I'll find and conquer that microbe! There will be no more deaths by cancer! The world will shed its fear of a vanquished menace! I shall break open the dark chrysalis and lead them into the light! For you! God—God must be coming close to me again. He sent you. To God—my gratitude! I love you."

He bent over her hands, held them close together, against his forehead, then in one swift movement he moved them to crush them against his lips, dropped them, wheeled, caught up his hat and darted out the door.

The girl stood like one stricken, staring after him. Dumb. Whittly stared, too, moveless in his chair, till he found his tongue and blurted out baldly, "Crazy—crazy as a loon, batty—mad as a March hare!"

"He's not!" Helene's voice rose in an exultant cry of defense. "He's magnificent! My God, *what* a dream!"

Whittly sat motionless, his gaze on Helene Kinkaid, and something quivered in the air about her like a living energy. The old doctor repeated after her, shaken, dazed, "Yes—my God—what a *dream!*"

Saul rushed home and whirled into the house adjoining the laboratory. His gaunt and silent mother rose to her feet and peered down into his face as he halted before her. She listened in silence as he poured out a torrent of flaming, incoherent words.

"Mother! I know what I'm going to do! I'm going to conquer cancer!" *Cancer!* The word shot through her like a flame, leaving her cold and rigid, staring transfixed into his enormous eyes as he raced on. "Whittly—Whittly told me. God—what a hideous picture he drew—something eating, eating, eating into the living flesh. He said that. He made me see it. He made me see the whole world—flaccid in fear of a creeping crawling menace no one can discover nor stay! I'm going to stop it! I'm going to find the microbe that causes it. I'm going to save the world!"

His mother made no move, spoke no word. She was stricken dumb with the abrupt raising of her own secret horror and a wild, surging hope. For all his incoherency there was about him a new one-pointed driving purpose, a crystallization of effort into a given channel. She knew that the star in his forehead was shining clear. She saw, too. She saw the long black trail upon which his feet were unalterably set; a trail bloody and strewn with horrors, winding through welters of stench and putrefying flesh—but she did not flinch. She was made of stern stuff.

"And—there was a girl!" Saul's voice dropped to an awed, somber throb. "There *is* a girl. She's working in Whittly's office. That's immaterial. She's mine! She came to help me on—to guide my feet, to flagellate my heart when my will grows weary. It will grow weary, I know that. It will be a long and bitter fight. But I'll have Helene—I'll have you! It may take me all my

life! But I can't fail! There's—Helene!"

He whirled and went racing into the laboratory, and his mother stood dumbly gazing after him. For a long while she stood utterly still, her eyes on the doorway where he had disappeared. A girl! Saul—and a girl. She hadn't thought there would ever be girls in Saul's life. Girls—no, one. A girl. Saul—the kind to give to one all he had. Helene. There wouldn't be any other. Her thought swerved from this Helene to her son and the thing he had sworn to do.

Slowly she turned and went to stand before a mirror and stare into her own face. Two in her family had died of cancer of the liver, for which there is no aid and no salvation. She lived daily companion of a hideous fear that in time the gruesome horror must claim her also. Cancer. Deadly, terrifying, a loathsome thing crawling upon her. She shivered. Saul had never known. Saul must not know. But she bit her lip between her teeth, and prayed. In the waxing light of the star set upon her son's forehead she dreamed in her somber silent soul that there might be born a cure for her bodily danger and her mental crazing fear.

SAUL'S first step toward his colossal undertaking was to seek out two men as associates and co-workers. He used his own peculiar methods for finding those men. He said good-bye to his mother and Helene Kinkaid, then he started on his quest. He went to some three hundred students of chemistry and bacteriology, took them aside and propounded to each four identical questions, without preceding his questions by explanation or preface of any kind. Some laughed at him. Some surlily dismissed him. Some went into long and elaborate elucidation. Some stared and edged warily away from him, judging him wildly insane. Only two understood him instantly. Only two answered in the manner in which he wished to be answered, proving themselves the men he sought; men with capacity for ideals and dreams, men with discernment, men who knew no reluctance for the drudgery of an eternal pursuit. And those two, in different words, said in gist exactly the same thing.

Saul asked: "What do you *think?*" Henry Arn replied quietly, "Enough to fill an encyclopedia." John Cloud said with slow emphasis, "More than I could tell if I talked for twenty years."

Saul asked: "What do you *believe?*" Henry Arn smiled as he said, "Not so much." John Cloud's eyes twinkled as he voiced his words, "Not enough to shout about."

Saul asked: "What do you *know?*" Henry Arn retorted grimly, "Still less!" John Cloud shrugged and replied, "Nothing."

Then Saul asked like a shot: "What do you *want?*" Henry Arn sighed and shook his head, but he spoke two words, "To do." John Cloud looked away somewhere into space and answered, "To give."

When Saul Blauvette went back to his barn of a laboratory, with its dusty, dirty, broken-glass-cluttered tables, wearied with his long search and eager to begin the business of active campaign against cancer, he took with him two willing and intensely interested assistants—John Cloud and Henry Arn. His gaunt mother received them and spread their evening meal, searching the faces of these new men, satisfying herself that they were at least partly worthy to work with her son of the star.

In the dusty cluttered laboratory Saul made room for dozens of animal cages of all sizes, ranging from a mouse cage to a monkey cage. He bought pair after pair of beasts; rabbits, guinea-pigs, white rats, and three monkeys; caught endless mice

and rats and installed them in those cages. He worried and fussed and spluttered about till he had the place more cluttered than ever before, but containing easily all his cages and some hundred-odd animals for experimental purposes.

There is this for the spirit of Saul Blauvette and the magnitude of his dream. Not once did John Cloud, who was fastidious, nor Henry Arn, who was meticulous, both of them used to order and methodical neatness in their own deserted spotless workrooms in far places, ever even notice the shambles of the laboratory into which they had come to spend their lives in the pursuing of a monumental ideal. They saw only and always the living soul of the thing Saul Blauvette had sworn to do; the soul that challenged them to ever countenance discouragement, to ever fail of less proportionate effort than he.

Saul's first reckless gesture was to destroy the multitude of microbes living and increasing from moment to moment in the numberless flasks and bottles about his tables and shelves. He boiled them for hours to make their death certain, and buried them in a hole in the grove back of the laboratory. Over them, when the hole was filled and no one was about to observe him, he said a wild pagan rite. The minute beasts had served their purpose; had satisfied and whetted his curiosity; had lured him on to more soaring heights, heights of an infinitude too vast for most men to conceive. They must be honored, but they must go. They went.

Then the small man with the great dream carried his flasks back to the laboratory by the armfuls, took brief leave of his mother, John Cloud and Henry Arn, and rushed away from the grove to seek old Doc Whittly and Helene. He hurried into the doctor's office and leaned over his desk, and Helene came swiftly from the inner rooms to look into his enormous eyes and find how the dream fared. Saul gripped her hands hungrily, and Whittly smiled up at him. The principal subject of conversation between the doctor and Helene of late had been Saul's triumphant return with two such men as Cloud and Arn.

"Helene, I'm ready to begin my active campaign. The stage is all set. I've collected something like a hundred and thirty animals, but—Doc!" He turned to Whittly with an annoyed frown, "I haven't managed to get one afflicted with cancer. To find the cancer microbe, I've got to have cancer tissue. Can't you help me out?"

"Yes—I think I can. Sit down, Saul." Whittly gestured toward a chair, and Saul sat down on the edge of it, drawing Helene to a seat beside him, running his fingers nervously over her wrist, waiting. "I have a patient with cancer of the tongue—he also has cancer of the cheek and lip. God, man!—the poor old chap's a hideous sight. He's pitiful, crawling with fear from the soul out. I can't help him—it's too late. He's gotten a little crazed over it, and he keeps jabbering about all the other poor devils who are doomed the way he is. He—oh, he's a terrible sight! Can't last long. Yesterday he was in. You saw him, Helene."

"Yes." Helene shuddered, shrinking up against Saul. "You mean that you're——?"

"Exactly," Whittly interrupted. "He wants me to give his body to some hospital carrying on a cancer research department, Saul. Instead, I'll give it to you. Poor devil! He makes me ache. He wants so to live, and he's got to die. Good God, Saul—if you can do this thing! You're so sure—and Helene believes in you so utterly! It's almost as though there were something from some other world reaching down to tell her—even I have begun to hope."

"Do more than hope, man! *Believe!*" Saul rose from his chair, still gripping Helene's hand. For a moment he stood, staring into her face, then he bent and kissed her swiftly and turned toward the door. He paused once to add a halting sentence: "Doc—it's a grisly thing to say. But I've got to get to work. You'll let me know—as soon—as soon as——"

"As soon as he passes," Helene's voice finished the stumbling words.

"I will." Whittly bowed his head gravely in a gesture of assent.

Saul stared back at Helene, his eyes flaming with their wild light, then he was gone.

He went back to his laboratory and told his gaunt fear-ridden mother, and Cloud and Arn, that the great campaign was under way. With an angry surge of rebellion in his heart, against those unseen forces that prey upon men and torture them with pain and fear, cause them decay and death, he cried at Arn; "And we've got to wait till the old man dies. What a hellish thing! We have to wait while he writhes in fear and suffers and dies, so that we can conquer through his corrupted flesh the source of the evil and save other men from like horror. Wait—wait—sit around waiting for a man to die! But, by God, we won't sit around! we'll do something!"

"What?" Cloud asked curtly.

"Set to work and develop some cancers of our own—on those beasts of ours, by the process of irritation. Come on, let's get to work!"

They took four guinea-pigs, three rats and six mice, and upon their sensitive bellies painted a round spot the size of the largest proportionate free area; painted them with soot and tar, stinging oils and irritating gums. The little brutes wriggled and squealed, and Saul, in his pity for their pain and the pity for the necessity of it, put out of his mind the thought of the old man dying of cancer. He set his attention savagely upon the squirming rats, mice and guinea-pigs, while Cloud and Arn stood at his elbow and painted tar and oils at his directions, and his mother shifted like a somber shadow in the living rooms next the laboratory.

Every day and twice a day he and his men painted the spots on the animals' bellies with the noxious substances, and time went by. A month slid by, and Saul broke away from the laboratory for a white hour with Helene, but never once to her nor to Whittly did he mention the old man with cancer. Inarticulately Whittly understood and kept his own grim silence. He knew Saul's thoughts, and quivered at their import. Waiting for a man to die. An old man, who need not have died so soon. An old man crushed under a horror that was worse than his pain. Waiting. Hideous business. Necessary business. Waiting for an old man to die and be cut up and run through a microscope.

And Saul went back to the laboratory, to pace furiously up and down the long, stinking, cluttered room. Talking an incoherent jumble of words to himself. Trying to think of Helene. Trying to keep the picture of a ghastly old face from coming in between him and the vision of her eyes. Pausing to examine guinea-pigs, rats and mice. Shooting flaming words at Henry Arn, listening to the hypothesis of John Cloud. Trying to forget the old man — trying not to wish he would hurry up and die. Shrinking at the persistent, bitter urge that the old body was needed. Horrible to wish a man would die, to cheat him of even a day of ugly life. Some old man with a terrible face. A man whose very name he did not know, did not want to know. Let him remain so, unknown, obscure, an

anonymous gift of sacrificial rite to the great cause of science.

Waiting. Another month slid by. Three months. Four. Months of mad experimenting, flecked with hours of pause glorified by Helene Kinkaid, by her unwavering faith and words to cheer him on. Months of weltering work in the stinking laboratory. And on the bellies of three guinea-pigs, two rats and four mice small warts began to appear. Feverishly Saul and his co-workers continued to apply the irritants, watching, waiting. But they were no longer waiting for an old man to die. They had probably started some experimental cancers of their own on the animals. They waited for those cancers to develop. They forgot all about the old man. It was then the old man died.

Whittly sent for Saul. Saul, knowing what the summons meant, took Cloud and Arn with him and hurried to the doctor's office, where the doctor had taken the wasted, disease-eaten body. They three stood by Whittly and stared at the gruesome thing that had been a man. Stared at the ghastly putrid mass on his cheek and lip, and forgot even that they had waited for him to die. They remembered only that they were scientists and experimentalists, following in the wake of a gigantic vision. They remembered sharply that because he had died a million others might be saved the same awful end. With Whittly's aid they wrapped up the body and under cover of the night carried it to the laboratory.

Whittly took one look at the long, barnlike room, glanced at the sheeted body on the table, bade them a hasty good-night and turned his back upon the ghoulish task that lay before them. Saul never even glanced around as the door closed behind the departing doctor and Arn leaned over to lift the sheet from the still body.

From then on through the night the three scientists took little heed of the hours marching toward the dawn. They cut from the old man's throat the putrid remains of his tongue, and from his cheek and lip the other cancerous growths. They dissected the cancers into small pieces and put the pieces in fifty small flasks. All but one of the flasks they rendered airtight by fusing their necks in flame. Then they washed their hands in bichloride of mercury to kill clinging menacing germs and began dissecting the body. From each section of the body, from hand to liver, omitting no organ nor part, they took other diminutive pieces of flesh and sealed them in other flasks, while in the adjoining house Saul's mother lay white and sleepless, shrinking at the knowledge of the hideous work going on in the laboratory. And away in her white-walled room, knowing also, Helene prayed. And both women kept their eyes in blind faith on the star set in Saul's forehead.

BEFORE daylight three grim scientists buried what remained of that nameless aged man whose sacrifice called to their highest efforts through virtue of his agonies. Reverently they buried him, saying over him a requiem of sadness for his pain and a prayer that their seeming desecration of his wretched flesh should not be in vain. Then Saul led the way back to the laboratory where ninety-two flasks with their grisly contents were littered over tables and chairs and shelves. The one flask not sealed stood near one of the powerful microscopes, ready for the first step of investigation. Saul halted in front of the microscope, staring at the corked flask, and his hands trembled as he pulled the cork, picked up a tiny spun glass tube and sucked into it a drop of cancer-juice from the flask.

"Servetus was burned to death in Geneva three hundred and seventy-three years ago for just what we did tonight," Arn said soberly, thinking

of the dissected body laid away under the trees.

Saul raised his head from his task and glanced into Arn's face with a sudden startled sense of premonition. Burned to death for cutting up the body of a man. But that was centuries ago. No longer were men burned for advancing the cause of science. This was the Twentieth Century. Yet for a moment something swept over him that made him shrink. He felt that scorching heat of flame, he heard the cries of an angry mob, he breathed the choking gust of billowing smoke, he visioned the great laboratory eaten by lurid flames—a mighty funeral pyre. He strove to put the weird prescience from him, as he stepped back and held up a shaking hand, signaling John Cloud to focus the lens. Cloud hesitated a moment and looked sharply into Saul's eyes.

"What is it?" he asked quickly.

"N—nothing." Saul shook his head. "It's funny that Henry should say that. Take a look at that thing, will you, John?"

Cloud frowned, glanced at Arn and bent over the instrument. Saul wheeled abruptly and began pacing the floor, his face tense and colorless, his eyes blazing. Why should that chance remark of Henry Arn's affect him so? Maybe it was a warning. They might cause some explosions in the laboratory with all its inflammable paraphernalia. He'd have to watch out. He paused, as John Cloud looked up from the microscope and expended a deep breath.

"What do you see?" he demanded.

"Nothing." Cloud shook his head. "Simply nothing."

"But there *is* something!" Saul whirled on Arn, his uncanny sense of premonition swept away in the eager interest that caught him. He gestured toward the small glass tube. "There *must* be something. Look, Henry. *You* look."

Arn stepped to the table as Cloud got out of his way, and sat down in the chair Cloud had vacated. He bent over the microscope and stared intently through its mighty eye. But no microbe of any size or description met his searching gaze. No little rods, no little wriggling corkscrews, no tiny bulbs with fuzzy noses. He raised his head and shrugged as he rose to his feet.

"No, I can't see a thing, Saul. I don't think there is anything *to* see."

"There *must* be, I tell you!" Saul frowned and rushed forward to push him aside. "Do you say there *is* nothing because you *see* nothing the first time you look? Don't be idiotic, Henry. It may take us a year to find it. Let me examine that tube."

Cloud and Arn looked on silently as the little scientist concentrated his gaze through the lens, too powerful to allow even the most minute subvisible microbe to escape unseen. He stared long and silently, and Cloud stirred in impatience.

"Well—what do you find? There isn't anything, is there?"

Saul made no response, but sat like a statue, his eye glued to the lens, seeking some tiny germ of death as reward for their initial search. No germ was visible there to him, any more than it had been visible to Cloud and Arn. There was nothing at all in the milky cancer-juice to meet his gaze. Grimly he held himself still, searching, unwilling to believe that there was no germ to see. Yet believe he must. Nothing was there. He blinked his eyes shut once, and looked again. No, nothing. There were no little oblong seeds with crinkly tails, no little spider-like beasts with numberless hairy legs, no little crazy dots. Nothing. He looked up from the lens frowning, shaking his head. But the gesture was one of negation merely, it held no hint of discouragement or impatience.

"No, I don't *see* anything," he admitted. "But that doesn't say there is nothing to see. Perhaps we didn't get any germs in that particular atom of fluid. Well, on with the dance! We'll pulverize the tissue and put it all through the microscope, every drop in that flask. We'll find that microbe if it's the last thing we ever do!"

John Cloud and Henry Arn nodded silent agreement, and roused themselves to renewed effort. They brought other test-tubes. They crushed the cancer fiber in the flask to a characterless pulp, flesh and juice, and drop by drop they ran it under the mighty lens. Nothing rewarded them. No visible microbe was there. By then it had passed the dawn, and the three men were worn to nervous exhaustion. Saul abruptly corked the flask into which they had replaced the crushed portion of the cancer, washed his hands in bichloride of mercury and went into the adjoining house to lie down on his bed and strive for sleep. Cloud and Arn followed his example. His mother, hearing his step, sighed deeply, turned over on her cool white sheet and closed her eyes. She slept deeply, but there was little sleep for the three men in the rooms beyond hers.

At 1 in the afternoon Saul rose from his fitful inadequate rest and hurried into the laboratory, burned by the thing that eluded him, driven by his brain that shouted to know. John Cloud was there before him, wandering restlessly about the cluttered room, examining the cancers beginning to form on the bellies of the animals, waiting for Saul to come and renew the search. Saul greeted him with brusk tenseness and reached for one of the sealed flasks just as Henry Arn followed him into the laboratory. That day the three repeated their effort to find some menacing organism of life in the first of the fifty cancer-filled sealed flasks. The result they achieved precisely paralleled that of the day before. Midnight found them replacing that second portion of cancer in its flask and resealing it against a future day.

The next day they opened the third flask, and the next day the fourth, and still the result was the same. No microbe showed of any kind in any place. So it went for fifty days. For fifty days three valiant men searching after the germ of death pored over the microscopes, crushed the grisly pulp from the dead man's tongue, lip and cheek, placed it bit by bit under the microscope, stared at it long and silently only to replace it in the flask from which they had taken it, knowing a baffled sense of failure and discouragement.

Saul's grim gaunt mother hovered in the background like a silent shadow, cooking their meals, watching their haggard, fanatical eyes, hugging her secret horror and praying her hopeless prayers. And she thought of Helene. Helene waited, dumb, apart.

Had not John Cloud and Henry Arn fed the rats, guinea-pigs, monkeys, rabbits and mice, the animals would have died before their term of usefulness was begun. Saul forgot them completely. He was as a man crazed. By the time they three had examined and resealed the last of the fifty flasks their brains were weary with strain, their eyes red-rimmed with too much looking and too little sleep, their hands were blackened with bichloride of mercury and they had discovered precisely nothing.

"I'm going to submit the contents of one flask to blue aniline dye," Saul announced, impatiently, with the air of a man angered at the thing that eluded him. He glanced about the dirty laboratory where the grisly flasks with their hidden ugly secret were scattered about in unorderly profusion. "If that shows nothing we'll try a porcelain strainer. It

may be that the cancer microbe is utterly invisible, colorless as water, and that the dye will bring it to light. We'll try, anyhow. We'll double up on it. I'll use blue dye, Henry, and you and John use red. Damn it, we're going to find that microbe!" Not once had he even thought of considering that there might be no microbe.

Henry Arn nodded his tired head and set to work. He lighted an alcohol lamp and prepared the dye, while John Cloud for the second time broke open a flask and brought for their research a small part of the crushed cancer pulp. In the very dust of the laboratory hope and tense interest vibrated as the three men threw themselves into the new experiment. Saul dyed pulp a bright blue, while Cloud and Arn dyed other pulp a flaring scarlet. There was a breathless hush over the cluttered room when finally the dyed stuff from the dead man's tongue was placed under the lenses. And three men looked till their eyes ached and their vision blurred, but it was as before. Nothing.

"What in blazes are we going to do now?" Cloud's voice was harsh with strain, and his haggard eyes demanded guidance of the man who had instituted the wild soul-breaking quest. "I can't conceive of any manner in which we can extend our search save by the porcelain of which you spoke. My God, Saul—any microbe ought to show up in some fashion, unless it's so utterly minute it can't be seen."

He got up from the table as he spoke, removing with an idle hand the small glass rod from the red dye. As he did so, one drop of the crimson fluid dropped on the small portion of blue-dyed pulp lying on a thin glass slide by Saul's microscope. Red and blue the colors fused and turned a rich purple. No one noticed it but Henry Arn. Idly, almost without curiosity, he sucked up a portion of the purple mess and placed the glass tube containing it under the microscope, bending to glance at it with weary indifference. For a moment his eyes riveted and stared, then the weary indifference vanished and he cried out with a vehemence that caused Cloud and Saul to start and fix on him their wondering eyes.

"What have you found?" Saul asked sharply.

"I don't know, but I've certainly found something!" Arn pointed at the lens, shaking with excitement. "The fusing of the two dyes has shown up your microbe, Saul! Look at him!"

SAUL leaped to the microscope and squinted through its powerful eye. Arn and Cloud watched him with fascinated gaze as he caught his breath and stared through the lens. A large microbe, dyed a dirty purple, showed clearly in the spun glass tube. It was fully a thousandth of an inch long, with a globular hairy body and eight long arms that continually reached out and groped for something to grasp and devour. It was hideously like a devil-fish in miniature.

Saul watched it for a moment in stunned silence, then lifted his head and turned to John Cloud. The gleam of exultation was in his enormous eyes, and his voice shook as he cried, "Look, John! Henry's found it! A devil-fish microbe. It's a whopper, too. Now we've got to work like hell. Look!"

Cloud grinned wanly at the ludicrous cry as he stepped quickly to the microscope and sat down to examine the grisly microbe. It writhed and groped. Cloud shuddered involuntarily and shifted the tube. Five other microbes of the same species appeared in the thin tube of glass. For a moment a breathless hush settled

over the laboratory, as three men stared at each other and knew what they had discovered. Cloud rose slowly to his feet, his eyes on Saul's intense face. All three of them knew they were gone a good way over their long-seeming hopeless road.

Then they proceeded to do what Saul had said they must do — to work! They hurried frantically till dawn, and the first light found them red-eyed, weary and shaken, but triumphant. They had, in those lapsing hours, opened the fifty flasks containing the cancer tissue, taken from each flask a portion to dye and examine. Experimenting disclosed early in the night that neither by first applying the red dye nor by first fusing the two colors and then dyeing the pulp would the microbe appear. Some freakish result of using first the blue dye and then the red made the gruesome atom visible. But by dawn the three men had proved conclusively that their new-found devil-fish microbe was swarming in every flask of cancer tissue.

Saul, mad with the fever of the search, refused to stop for rest, even though he swayed on his feet from weariness. Cloud and Arn rubbed their smarting eyes, shook themselves wider awake as their lids drooped in sheer exhaustion, and grimly followed in his wake. They turned themselves to the task of examining the pieces of healthy tissue they had taken from the old man's body and sealed in the other flasks. They put them through the process of dyeing and submitted them to the eye of the mighty lens. Through every portion of the dead man's body-tissue untouched by the cancerous growth the devil-fish microbe swarmed and groped and crawled.

"Well, that's that." Saul leaned back in his chair and rubbed his burning eyes, watching Cloud reseal the last of the flasks. "We've found the microbe. It's a lollapalooza, isn't it? But there's so much more to be done that I hardly know where to begin. You two are dead on your feet. So am I. Let's turn in for a few hours' sleep. Then I'm off to see old Doc Whittly."

The three trooped wearily out of the laboratory, and Saul paused at the door to glance back at the flasks littering tables and shelves. There was a grim light of triumph in his enormous eyes, and Cloud and Arn, understanding, walked on and left him alone with the first vision of his great dream's possible fulfilment. His mother, seeing Cloud and Arn come in without him, slipped to the laboratory door, and he turned, hearing her step beside him. She saw the light on his face, and the solemn stillness in his eyes.

"You—*found* it?" she whispered, and hope struck at her secret horror.

"We've found it." Saul nodded, but there his tongue stopped.

She, knowing him better than any other, laid her arm across his shoulders, and they stood in a hush, staring together at the flasks filled with the purple-dyed tissue which had at last yielded up its ugly secret. Then without a breath of warning Saul fainted against her. She lifted him in her strong, lean arms, carried him to his bed, laid him down and bent over him. He was breathing regularly, in the deep sleep of utter exhaustion. She pulled down the blinds, walked back to him and paused to lay her hand on his forehead. She fancied she felt the five points of a star. Saul moved and muttered in his sleep, muttered the name, "Helene." Helene! His mother winced. She had not yet been able to accept Helene as tangible reality. Not again had Saul spoken of her, not once had the girl come near the laboratory. But the girl was in Whittly's office, and Saul

went there more often than he would have done to see Whittly alone. And he muttered "Helene!" in his sleep. His mother set her lips tightly. She wanted to see the girl, and again she shrank from seeing her. From even speaking of her.

Must she give Saul up to this other, younger woman? Give him up, or share him, which? She turned with an empty feeling at her heart, walked out and left him to his rest. And Henry Arn, glancing out of his window as he got into bed, saw her kneel to lay a sheaf of flowers on the grave of the old man under the trees.

Long before Cloud and Arn awoke, Saul shook himself out of his exhausted slumber, got to his feet and hurried into the laboratory. He fussed around at grim business with a sharp blade, and dyes, and the microscope. Satisfied with what he wanted to know, he snatched his hat and rushed off to old Doc Whittly's office. Whittly sat at his desk writing out a prescription, and Helene stood arranging instruments in the cabinet. Both of them looked across the room at Saul as he opened the door and stepped inside. Their gaze made a swift survey of the little scientist's drawn face, his red-rimmed eyes, his bichloride-blackened hands.

"Saul!" Helene walked swiftly toward him, hands outstretched to meet his, frowning in anxious solicitude. "You've got to go slower! You're burning yourself up! You need rest."

"I rest—here." Saul slid into a chair and drew her into his arms, laying his head wearily against her shoulder.

"Helene's right," the old doctor put in shortly, shaking his head in reproof. "You'll have to let up a bit or you'll never last through. Have you found anything yet? How long have you been fussing with that cancer tissue, anyway?"

"It seems a year!" Helene said, her sober eyes on Saul's tired face.

"It's really a little less than two months." Saul's smile flickered at her, but the light in his eyes flamed. "And—we've found the microbe. A horrible little freak. Looks like a devil-fish."

"You found it?" Whittly started, leaning toward the scientist.

"Oh, Saul! You *found* it!" Helene's arm slipped across Saul's shoulder, gripping him close, and her face glowed as he answered.

"We found it, all right! But that's only the beginning, Helene—Doc. The real racket is all to come. The microbe wasn't in the cancer alone, but all over the man's body. Now I've got to determine whether or not it appears in the healthy tissue of a body unaffected by cancer, or if it appears in any other disease. Are you performing any operations today and tomorrow, Doc?"

"Seven," Whittly replied, and Helene looked at the face against her shoulder wonderingly. "Six minor and one major. Why?"

"Any of 'em got cancer?"

"Nary a one, Saul. The worst is a case of appendicitis. What are you getting at now?"

"I want a snip of flesh from each of those people, a piece no bigger than a grain of corn. Helene, will you get seven bottles from that mess in my coat pocket next you? I only rest here. I don't want to move. Give 'em to Doc, will you? Put each piece in a separate bottle, Doc, and I'll come for them day after tomorrow. I want to see if I can find the cancer microbe in any of 'em."

Helene shivered involuntarily as she slipped her hand into his pocket, counted out seven little vials from

the dozen or so there, and extended them toward Whittly. Her heart flinched within her as she thought of their purpose.

"Saul—Saul, dear, you're ghastly!"

"Ghastly is right," Whittly agreed grimly. "But it's necessary ghastliness. It isn't exactly ethical. It's a crazy thing to do—but I'll do it, of course. I can easily, and no one ever the wiser save Helene. I'd do a good deal to help you win such a fight, young man! Give me another bottle, Helene."

"What for?" Helene raised her brows wonderingly, as she slipped her hand again into Saul's pocket.

"Oh, I'll give him a snip off my big toe," grinned the doctor. "I might as well help the good cause along; he and Arn and Cloud will."

"Yes, of course." Saul nodded. "I've already tested my own flesh—this morning after I got up, passed through the laboratory on my way here. There wasn't a sign of one in me. Helene—what are you doing?" His eyes caught her hand in the act of passing to Whittly not one but two more of the little bottles, and in her eyes he read her intent. His face whitened a visible shade, and he cried out a violent protest. "No, not you! God, no! I couldn't do that! Helene, put that bottle back! Not you!"

She hesitated and he took one of the bottles from her hand, shoving it quickly back into his pocket and extending the other toward Whittly. Whittly mumbled something about putting the vials away, got up from his chair and went into the other room.

"Good old Doc!" Saul dropped his head back against Helene's shoulder, and the weary lids drooped over his enormous eyes. "Lord, I *am* tired. Let me rest."

"Rest," Helene whispered, clasping him close. "Be still and rest. For if you break, the world loses its hope a hundred years too soon. Oh, Saul! Saul! Don't you know that men like you are born but once in a hundred years?"

"I know that women like you are born but once in a hundred centuries!" Saul's arms gripped in a swift, convulsive embrace. "Without you I might break. But here—I rest. With you I can go on for eternity."

There was silence in the doctor's grubby little office, silence and the sweep of the wings of morning, wings that brush from a man weariness of soul. For half an hour that might have been a moment or an eternity, neither of them moved. Saul, still against her shoulder, slept. Then he wakened, kissed her and went away without a word to break the glory of that hush. Went seeking Cloud and Arn. Found those two in the laboratory, curiously examining the tube in the microscope that held his own flesh.

"Say, Saul, what the devil's this?" Cloud demanded the moment he entered the room. "Human flesh without a cancer microbe, certainly. But it can't be out of one of the flasks!"

"No, it's off my hide," Saul answered quietly. "I've got to find out whether or not that microbe appears in healthy bodies unassailed by cancer. It isn't in me. Whittly's going to furnish me with sample pieces of flesh from seven different bodies besides his own in the next few days."

"In the meantime we'll just see how I stack up," Cloud replied quickly. "I was going to do it anyway."

"Me too," Arn seconded. "And the sooner the quicker."

Saul nodded as he took off his hat and hung it on a peg in the wall, his gratitude flaming to the two men who

purposed to walk step by step with him all the way. The three of them were busy through the next hour. Flesh from John Cloud's fingertip and from Henry Arn's shoulder went through the dye into the tube and passed under the powerful eye of the microscope. Cloud's flesh showed nothing but the ordinary composite of tissue and blood. But the piece of Henry Arn's shoulder showed six of the devil-fish microbes wriggling around and groping their ghastly arms.

"Now what in blazes does *that* mean?" Arn turned to Saul, paling at the sight.

"I think I can tell you exactly what it means," Saul replied, his enormous somber eyes on Henry's face. "But we'll have to prove it conclusively before we tell the world. It means that the cancer microbe is in some people and isn't in others. Where it comes from, and how it gets into people, is something else we've got to determine. A person with those microbes in his flesh might live to a healthy old age and die sound—if he lived cleanly and rightly. But let some part of his body become devitalized, either through misuse, disuse or abuse, and the microbe gets in its work. It can't devastate healthy tissues, and people uninfested with it can't get cancer if they want to. Women are more subjected to devitalizing influences than men—that's why more of them die of cancer. I told Doc Whittly that was the way it worked when I first began the big job, and I haven't changed my opinion yet. I intend proving it."

Henry nodded, staring down at the little tube that held his flesh and the minute devil-fish. His faith in the little scientist knew then its first spur of fear. Those beastly little bugs were crawling around in his body, waiting the moment to seize upon some devitalized tissue and make of him a living horror. He started to speak, and the voice of Saul's gaunt and silent mother halted him. All three men turned quickly to see her standing in the doorway, holding out toward Saul a little piece of blood-washed flesh.

"Here, Saul. From my side. See if they are in me."

"But Mother!" Saul sprang toward her, his face wrinkled in lines of shocked dismay. "You shouldn't —you're not a scientist——"

"I'm a scientist's mother!" Mrs. Blauvette's head went back proudly, and she looked down into his eyes with the dignity of her pride in him, as she steadily held toward him the small piece of flesh. "Look. I want to know."

Saul bowed over her hand and took the particle of tissue gently from her palm. Cloud and Arn stood back in a veiled silence, looking the other way, while the little scientist swiftly prepared the dye and reverently put through the process the flesh of the woman he so loved. It was so still in the laboratory that apparently not a soul breathed as he sucked the atom he had prepared into the tube and put it in the microscope. Long and steadily his enormous eyes stared through the powerful lens, then he raised his head and looked calmly into her face.

"Not a one. You couldn't get a cancer if you lived to be a thousand years old."

"Ah!" She breathed deeply, once, then shot at him a sudden question. "But how do you know people can't contract those microbes—can't become infected with them at any time?"

"I don't know," Saul admitted quietly. "But I believe their possession to be a congenital condition. That's something else I've got to prove. But you are immune, now, at

(Continued on page 860)

A Five-Minute Story

THE FOURTH DIMENSION

By CHARLES FORD

RIPLEY sang aloud in pure joy as the bladelike bow of his racing canoe slipped through the water. The wind was northwest and puffy, and the lake showed a lively blue and white under the sky. As he came about, over to windward he could see the green of the golf links slanting up from the water's edge and the white clubhouse gleaming through the trees; overhead the white and tinted clouds sailed before the wind, hardly dimming the sunshine. It was a pretty picture from the water, and he loved it. As the wind heeled the canoe over, his muscular legs shot him up to windward and the lively craft swished through the water, every puff wetting the sails half-way to their peaks and showering him with spray. Golf and tennis were good; but nothing wiped out the worries of a difficult and precarious business as did the little canoe. It needed skill, muscle and quick wits—a man's play.

Starting his sheets a bit, he stood out into the lake and hauled her into the wind again. Then a vicious blast came down the hill, the slide jammed and he went over.

A ducking was the least of his troubles; he was used to it. But this time something went wrong. His head struck a spar; and when at last he found himself swimming easily toward the boathouse that showed its gay awnings in a little cove below the clubhouse, he thought he must have been unconscious for a minute or two. Pulling himself up on the float, he turned, but could see nothing of the capsized canoe.

"I'll send Jimmy out for it," he said to himself, and went into the locker room for a rub-down. It struck him as rather singular that when he went out, float and boathouse and locker room had been gay with many-colored canoes, and girls in summer dresses, and men talking over golf scores and exchanging alibis and experiences. Now everything was quiet but for a few men he didn't know talking soberly in the locker room.

"Well, that ducking took Miller off my mind for a while, anyhow. Queer that crack on my skull didn't raise a lump," he mused, rubbing his head cautiously.

Jimmy did not appear by the time Ripley had changed, and he took out his clubs and strolled up the slope to the first tee. He felt a little tired and dazed, and it might be amusing to watch them drive off. Perhaps he would feel like playing a few holes if some acquaintance showed up about the time Miller began pestering him again. But it wasn't the Miller business that puzzled him now. The tee was the same, railing and water-can and sand-box were just where they belonged. The narrowing vista of the first fairway with the green and its tiny flag perched up on a knoll four hundred yards away were as usual.

The long ranks of translucent clouds sailing down the wind with their shadows flitting down the hill ahead of them were just as they had looked from the lake. Out there several racing canoes like his own danced over the whitecaps and heeled down before the puffs of wind. That puzzled him. His had been the only one of that type of canoe left on the lake because they were thought pretty risky for such treacherous water. Golfers drove off, several foursomes, and passed on up the course, but he didn't seem to know one of them. They seemed to be having a good time, but there wasn't any of the usual loud chaffing about handicaps and bets. Even the caddies were subdued. Somehow things were different.

A tall man, with a long, clean-shaven, pleasant face sat down beside him, nursing between his knees a formidable outfit of clubs. There was something about him that stirred Ripley's recollections, but he couldn't place him. Ripley nodded, however, and the stranger greeted him pleasantly.

"I don't think I've met you before. You're Mr. Ripley, aren't you? My name's Longdon."

Ripley stared a little. Where had he heard of Longdon? There was a famous racing-canoe man of that name; but somehow it stuck in Ripley's mind that the Longdon he was thinking of had been in the navy during the war and had lost his life saving a lot of others from an explosion on board a destroyer. This man couldn't be the same Longdon.

"Playing today?" asked Longdon.

Ripley shook his head. "I thought I would, but I'm a little tired," he said. "Just had a bad spill on the lake and my head doesn't seem quite right. Got a knock against the mast going over. I think I'll hunt up Jimmy and get him to go out after my canoe."

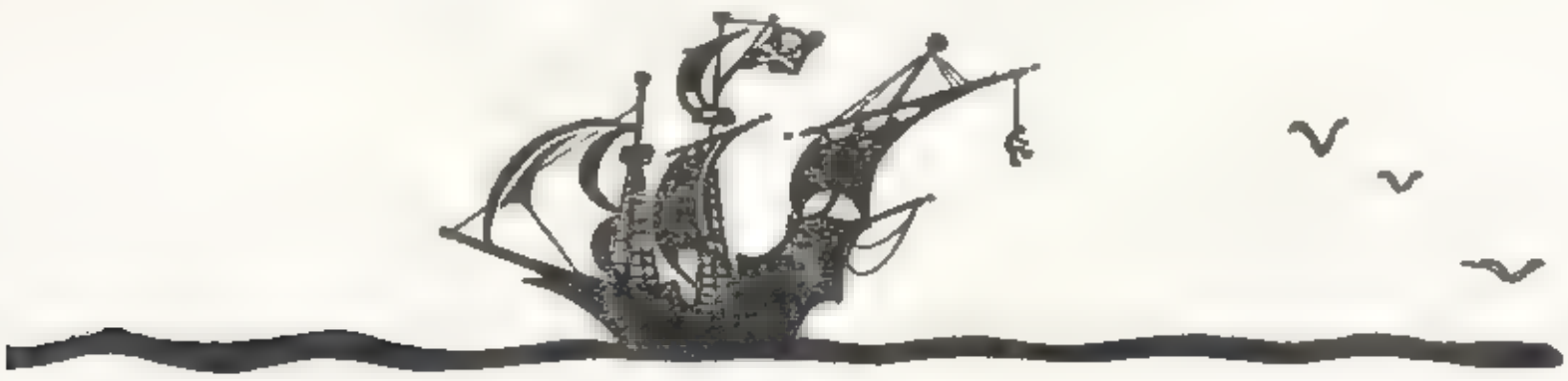
"If you don't mind, I'll walk down with you for a cigarette," Longdon said; and together they went down the slope to the boathouse, Longdon clipping dandelion heads with his putter as they strolled along. Ripley was aware of a certain restraint about his companion, as if he wanted to say something and didn't quite know how to go about it. They reached the landing, and sat down on a bench, looking out over the water and smoking in silence.

Suddenly Ripley saw a queer thing. It seemed as if the pretty scene before them rolled aside, and out there was a dory where there had been no dory before. Three men were in it, dragging for something in the lake; and alongside the dory was a capsized canoe, its green hull and a bit of white sail showing on the water.

Longdon looked at him sympathetically, but Ripley couldn't understand the look.

"Why, that's my canoe!" cried Ripley. "Jimmy must have —— What in the world are they dragging for?"

Longdon said: "It *is* your canoe. Don't you understand now?"



THE ARCTIC DEATH

BY WILFORD ALLEN

"They had arranged themselves in concentric circles, rank on rank, centered about that spark of ultimate glory."

IT WAS seldom that Charles Breinbar was excited. That he was excited then meant two things: first, that the matter was vastly important; second, that no crisis was immediately imminent, for in a crisis no man was ever more collected than he.

"Yes!" He was speaking in the explosive style which characterized him when excited. "If we fail—the whole world dies. And for me it is—vengeance as well. Come! Look and listen!" And he dragged me to some of his apparatus. Whirling the control dials, he motioned for me to watch a screen. There was a rapid play of lights and shadows, much as though I was looking at the reflection on a ceiling of a water surface disturbed by ripples. Suddenly he reached the right combination. The movement ceased and there was shown, plainly, a snow-covered surface, and on it was sprawled the body of a man, seemingly dead. I looked at Breinbar questioningly.

"Yes, dead!" he answered my unvoiced question. "That is an old friend, Amos Toble. Yesterday I got a letter from him. Said he was on a trip—up on the Dubaunt. Thought it would amuse me to see him. And so I turned the dials for him. Saw him tramping along. He came on a small animal, dead. Picked it up, seemed puzzled. Picked up another, also dead. It puzzled him. He walked on. Suddenly he stumbled. Seemed to regain his balance. Then collapsed. Quite dead!

"I quickly turned the dials to the 'Q' vibrations. They show up what we can't see by ordinary light, you know. I knew I would see his spirit, but I did not expect to see it struggling with Something! Trying to get back into his prone body, while the

Thing tried to hold him off! He was forced farther away, farther, and—my God! I suppose there is no reason why a spirit should not suffer, but I never expected to see one suffer as he did. But he lost. It was the Thing which slipped into the body, but seemed to find it in some way unfitted, for it left, and swept away the spirit of poor Toble, battling—battling! So for me it now means vengeance!"

Perhaps you recall the sensational tales in the papers some years back, of the "Arctic Death", as they called it. They gained no credence, fortunately. Luckily for the world it never knew just what the real truth was. All winter an expanding wave of death had spread fanlike out of the Arctic into the northern interior of Canada, an epidemic in which the lethal agent was unknown. The bodies bore no indication other than the fact of death, and, when found soon enough, the fact that they were frozen like ice. Yet it was certain that freezing was not the cause of death. It was an epidemic of unparalleled deadliness; when a community was stricken every vestige of life was destroyed. So the tales went.

Breinbar was continuing: "Neeley of Edmonton was down here last week. Told me the papers tell the truth. So I have been watching it on the screen here. I thought at first it was a medical problem. Then I saw it kill Toble. It must have been an inspiration, turning on the 'Q' rays, and catching the Things in the act. So I spent last night studying it. I think I know what is happening. But I need help. You are game to go with me? Good! It will be dangerous. But you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you are taking a fighting chance. If we don't take it, we shall all be killed anyway. If we take it, maybe——" He did not finish, but I could supply the end.

The net result of it all was that a few days later, rigged out in warm clothing and wearing a peculiar suit of insulating material with a network of wires and a battery-like contrivance within it, Breinbar and I set out in his airplane one morning. The machine was also equipped in a peculiar fashion, and we took along several strange implements, the use of which I knew nothing of at the time. To complete the weird outfit, each of us wore a mask which completely covered our heads, with eyepieces which appeared opaque to ordinary light, but were transparent to vibrations of a wave-length entirely outside of the visible range of the spectrum, and which moreover so transformed these vibrations that they became visible to us, and the world appeared to us as it must to any organism which can utilize such vibrations naturally. The most peculiar effect of this mask was that, the vibration which it admitted being present at night as during daytime, we could see equally well in darkness and daylight, becoming in effect as owl-eyed as we looked.

We traveled northward for two hours before Breinbar brought the plane down on the edge of a treeless expanse, and near a little settlement which we found to be a trading post. As we had sped northward in the eery lighting afforded by our masks, a sense of unreality had grown upon me, which increased rather than diminished when we came to earth and walked the few hundred yards to the little trading station.

There we had our first real news of the "Death." It had not yet reached that point, but that very morning a little Indian village some twenty miles to the northwest had been found with its few inhabitants lifeless, their bodies frozen stiff. What had been told in the papers was seemingly true; at least the story which we heard there was just as it

had been told in the press dispatches.

All morning Breinbar sat in the shelter of a little tent which we pitched, with a map spread out before him. About us were grouped the curious Indians and the few white people, not more than twenty in all. For some curious reason the Indians did not seem to be especially fearful. Perhaps the facts had been kept from them. Or perhaps some streak in their makeup caused them to regard fatalistically any threatening danger which they could not see before their eyes. With the whites it was different. They were frankly fearful, and kept plying us with questions, the while Breinbar was plying them, obtaining information which he carefully plotted on his map.

When he had finished with his map he called the head man, a tall Scotchman named McIntosh, and motioned for the others to move away.

"McIntosh," he began, "I guess you have it figured out that we have been sent up here by the government to study this plague. We are going right on, and I believe we shall be able to check it before long. But it will take some time, perhaps weeks.

"In the meantime we can give you no protection. And I am going to warn you, now—if you value your lives, don't sleep here tonight!" He finished in a tone which carried conviction to me, at least.

"Gad, Mister—what is your name? Mister Breinbar! You don't think It will be here tonight!" The tall Scotchman who spoke like an Englishman was palpably terrorized, although I took it that it would ordinarily take quite a bit to frighten him.

"I'm sure of it," Breinbar asserted.

"But what *is* the Thing? And how can It kill us tonight when we are perfectly well now?" The Scotchman's questions were evidently framed more to bolster up his courage than to obtain information.

"Don't be a fool, man! Get ready to leave at once. You may be too late now!" Breinbar was looking into the north as he spoke. "See!" he gesticulated, and we looked up along the trail to where a solitary figure had been approaching. It had begun to move erratically, then suddenly we saw it stagger and fall.

"For God's sake, man, get your people and *run!* Don't wait for anything. *Run!*" Breinbar fairly pushed the Scotchman from him, and he did not have to repeat the command, for before he had finished, the latter was already on his way toward the buildings, calling loudly to his people. Frightened the man may have been, but he was no coward, and was turning away from the opportunity of getting an immediate start to see that the others were warned.

Breinbar turned quickly to me meantime reaching inside of his clothes to press the catch on his protector. "Quick!" he said imperatively. "Reach in——" He did not wait to finish, but himself reached, and quickly locating the button on my suit, pressed it with a sigh of relief.

"Now we're safe. For God's sake never let anything touch that battery now!" He turned and looked toward the people who were streaming from the post in terror-stricken flight toward the south. "Poor devils! I'm afraid it's too late for them —nothing we can do for them now but hope! So it wasn't true, what the reports said, that the Death came only at night. I wondered; it didn't seem——"

Before he could finish, the rearmost straggler, an Indian woman with a baby, staggered a few paces and fell motionless. At her cry the others turned, then, shrieking, broke into wilder flight, but in vain.

One after another fell as though a machine-gun burst were sweeping them. The last to go was the Scotchman, gigantic among the shorter Indians. He displayed the most tremendous vitality, fighting as though in the grip of invisible assailants. Finally he, too, pitched forward, dead.

During it all we had been powerless to aid. Although I had no idea nor plan, I had started forward, but Breinbar restrained me.

"Stay here! They have to die!" He was speaking in the jerky fashion peculiar to him when he was stirred. "Hundreds more—we only make right moves—stop it—before it kills thousands—but not now!" I felt his muscles quivering as he gripped my arm, and knew that only his judgment was holding him back from following the same impulse to help the doomed fugitives.

"But," I objected, "if we can protect ourselves, can't we do anything to help them?"

"God! Not a thing! No more than Canute could hold back the sea. Beyond hope—unless we reach their center—paralyze that—there is no hope for the world. The center—we must! If not——," and he stopped as though afraid to think farther.

Then, suddenly, I seemed to see in the weird light of the mask an advancing wave of transparent formlessness, moving along in the manner of a cloud of gas on a battlefield, but not with the wind, against it! And it did not seem to have the consistency of a vapor, but of something more solid, like a gelatinous mass which rolled along and engulfed the fleeing figures. It was impalpable, for it had passed over us without my having detected its presence in any way. Yet, as it reached and touched each doomed fugitive, it struck him instantaneously with the finger of death, all but the Scotchman, who had seemed to sense its existence as an entity and tore desperately at it for a moment before he, too, pitched forward. And through it all I felt absolutely nothing except the sensation of awful chill which was at first pressed back into the submerged part of my consciousness by the awfulness of the happenings. But after the last victim had fallen stark it returned to dominate completely my impressions.

I asked Breinbar if he too felt the chill, but his only reply was a harsh "Naturally!" a sardonic gleam in his eyes as he said it.

And then I noticed that our plane was covered with glistening ice crystals, as though it had been chilled below the dew-point of the air so that frost was forming upon it. Hurrying over to the post buildings I found that there, too, the frost was forming over everything, and even water in containers, which had been liquid in the warmer air of the interior of the houses, was solidifying as I watched it.

A horrid thought came to my mind, and I rushed to the bodies, hoping that I was mistaken. My horrified fear was justified. Every body, although but a few short minutes before it had been warm with life, was frozen stiff, so cold that the fingers on touching it were burned as by the touch of liquid air, and the flesh had taken on a horrible yellowish, half-transparent appearance.

Breinbar had followed me around, observing my actions with that terrible, half-amused gleam in his eyes, as though he already knew what I would find, but he ventured no statement beyond a short answer when I asked him, in horror, "For God's sake, what is it?"

"You might call it what the papers do, the 'Arctic Death'," was all he said.

He suddenly became all impatience again and hurried me on. I wanted to stay long enough at least to get the bodies under a covering of earth.

There is something in human nature which rebels against leaving the dead of one's kind for the beasts to mouth. But Breinbar would not hear of it.

We climbed again into the plane and advanced into the treeless plain by short stages, with frequent side flights. At the halts between the short flights Breinbar would take readings with a metallic thermometer which was a part of his equipment, entering the results on his map. I noticed the figures which he put down, and in spite of the feeling of intense cold, I was surprized at the degree of cold which they indicated. In a region where forty degrees below zero is a mark reached only once or twice a winter if that often, the temperatures which he was recording fell within the first few hours lower than two hundred Fahrenheit degrees below zero. It seemed incredible that we could live in such a temperature, and I realized that it was only due to the protection of the insulating suit which I wore that the cold did not freeze me in an instant. Out of curiosity I took the thermometer and placed it within a few inches of my body, as I had noticed that Breinbar laid it down, then walked away several feet to remove the influence of his body, to remain away two or three minutes before he returned quickly and read it as though afraid he could not reach it quickly enough to get the correct reading. I was not altogether surprized to find that the temperature which surrounded my body, at least within a few inches distance, was much warmer, although quite cold enough, being thirty-five below at a time when the temperature at a distance of several feet was two hundred and five—a hundred and eighty degrees lower.

Finally it seemed that he had accumulated all the information which he needed, for he drew the isotherms connecting the points of equal temperature on his map, obtaining curves which were distinctly circular in form, with the center definitely located.

Pointing to that center on the map he turned to me. "That's where we've got to go to find it, George. If I'd only——"

His words were suddenly cut short as a dark form sprang from behind us and felled him with the single impact.

I turned to face the thing, and the horror which swept over me on seeing that form robbed me of what power I might have had to resist the sinisterly powerful bulk of the Scotchman whom we had left stiff in death only a few hours before! As it touched me I was galvanized into activity by the burning cold of the frozen hands, but I was powerless in the resistless grasp. My only satisfaction was in noting that the warmth of my body seemed to cause as intense an agony to him as the searing cold of his touch did to me. He handled me as one does a hot potato, as he trussed me up securely; then turned, and as gingerly bound up Breinbar.

All this time he had uttered no sound, nor did he do so even when, about to leave, he turned and leered into my face with a hellish chuckle. But the acme of it all came when, as he took his departure toward the south again, I saw that he was accompanied as by a bodyguard, by ranks of round balls of that gelatinous substance, each about three and a half feet in diameter, perfectly round and featureless, yet moving, rolling along in perfect order; animate things, possessed of an intelligence! As the import of what my eyes saw began to seep into my brain, the world began to swim around, and I felt myself sinking forward into an ocean of swirling darkness and nothingness.

It was hours later when I returned to consciousness, for while it had been in the early afternoon when I had last noted the time, it was considerably after sunset, although still light to me through my mask. Breinbar was kneeling beside me, chafing my wrists.

Before we went on from that place I learned more, for after the narrow escape we had just had I wanted to know something more definite of what we might expect, and I am afraid I said so with more feeling than I usually put into my voice when talking to Breinbar. "Now look here," I complained, "it seems to me if we are going to be jumped by dead men and such things I ought to know more about it than I do."

"You're right, George," my friend answered. "I was just thinking that myself. We had a narrow squeak that time. If It had only had the intelligence to destroy our insulation—well, It didn't. It could not have touched us in Its natural form, but in the body of the tall Scotchman It had an instrument with which It could easily have eliminated us from the affair." He fell silent, and I was afraid he was going to retreat into his own thoughts again. Just as I was on the point of speaking he began again, "Well, it shows They are not infallible. They slipped that time, and, now that we are on our guard, I think we have a chance, a fighting chance."

This time the pause was so long that I did break into it. "But what is this Thing, this Intelligence you are talking about?" I insisted.

"I won't say what It is, only what It might be, although it is all we have to go on, and I am working on the assumption that the hypothesis is correct," he resumed. "Just suppose there is another form of matter, one we can not know through any sense, nor measure; but one which occupies the same space we do. Suppose that beings exist, composed of such matter. Suppose that they are able to dissociate their intelligences from their individual selves, and that those then discarnate intelligences assemble and combine into one great central intelligence, which functions for the entire race of beings, directing them. If you suppose that, you can suppose that if such beings, directed in that manner, are responsible for this eruption of death, the only hope we have is in reaching that central intelligence and somehow influencing it."

"But," I interrupted again, "you don't mean to say those were the balls we saw? It can't be!"

"Why not? You saw them, and you saw people killed by them. You saw that they and everything they did was inexplicable by the laws of nature as we know them. How else would you explain them?"

"Yes, but the intelligence you speak of—how do you know It exists, and in that form? And what can we hope to do to It?" I was sinking into the slough of despondency as the logic of Breinbar's statements was shown to me as I reasoned back. It was inescapably true, it seemed, and as inescapably hopeless. How could we cope with such Things, especially if, as he was calmly telling me, they operated under the direction of a pooled intelligence? I could not even hope to hope.

Breinbar did not seem so hopeless, for he said, although with considerable gravity, "Some day I can tell you how I know it, sometime when we have more time. Right now, I am afraid you will see it all yourself before long. I know we have only one hope, one chance. Not much, but we can take it fighting."

But my morale was gone, and if I followed and did Breinbar's bidding during the time which followed, it was not because I still harbored the slightest spark of hope, but rather

that, believing that we and all other living things were doomed, I was filled with a sullen rage against the Things and a smoldering desire to close with them and die fighting, hurting them as I knew I could hurt, after seeing the Thing which had been the Scotchman cringe at the touch of my body.

MEMORY holds only for the high spots of the ensuing time. I moved with Breinbar as in a stupor, toward the center of the eery plain where we began to see, looming up, a single peak of barren rock. More and more of those hellish balls of pestilence passed us, rolling over the snow-covered plain, and I saw that I had been mistaken in thinking they were simple balls without appendages. It was true that there were none except when one was needed for some purpose, then they were able to throw out from any part of themselves grotesquely shaped limbs, to any required length; or so it seemed to us, to whom all portions of the Things appeared alike. I might have derived some comfort from the way in which they rebounded in evident distress when they inadvertently approached us too closely; I did get a savage satisfaction from their pain, but I was too deeply steeped in the apathy of despair for any heartening emotion.

And the cold grew always more intense. There came a time when Breinbar let the thermometer fall from his numbed fingers after picking it up, and when it struck the ground, metal though it was, it shattered into as many pieces as though it had been brittle glass, so intense was the cold.

Did I say we had long since lost the use of our plane? That is easily understandable, with such unearthly temperatures. The only wonder, which is still inexplicable to me, although doubtless due to Breinbar's planning, is that we had its use so long. When it failed, even Breinbar appeared to lose hope for an instant, or at least to consider our prospects more desperate. We must win before our strength failed, for of course we were virtually without supplies, except the few rations of concentrated food we carried on us. The one desperate hope to which we clung was to reach the Intelligence which was directing the Things before our strength gave out.

As I look back now, it seems presumptuous, two men matching strength against the concentrated power of the intelligence of a world. But it was not. It was desperation.

The forward struggle became endlessly long and hopeless without end. The death and the cold of the plain and its dreariness entered into the very soul until there was nothing but the consciousness of the endless plain with its wheeling balls from the outer spaces of hell itself, and back in the darkness of our minds the dull compulsion, vague and intangible, but potent, that we must plod on forever if need be, and reach that bleak monadnock ahead. And under the unreasoning compulsion of that impulse we plunged dumbly on, ever drawing nearer to the goal, yet our progress was so terribly slow.

And the balls came thicker. We were constantly jostled by them, and, while they recoiled as though injured by the touch, we also suffered a sharp sting of cold at each impact. So there was room for gratitude even in our numbing minds when the news of our coming and of the desirability of keeping out of our way seemed to spread ahead of us, and we were given a clear passageway.

At last we neared the black-gray rock, and a final crushing despair overwhelmed me as I saw that the balls were issuing from the rock itself, not from any opening into which we could penetrate. If what we

sought was inside that huge pile of unbroken rock, how could we ever reach it? I gave up the last shred of hope, a shred which unknown I must have been clinging to, for I found that I did have it to lose, although an hour before I would have said I had none left. So it was nothing but the automatic functioning of my mind which made my lips form the words, "We're gone now! Do you see those Things pass through the solid rock? How can we cope with that?"

But while for the last hour or so Breinbar had seemed almost as dispirited as I, his action under what to me was the most disheartening sight of all was surprizing, even to me who was almost beyond the reach of surprize or any emotion save despair. He took from his back the nozzle of something that looked like the flame-throwers used by the Teutons in the World War. With a vindictiveness which was unusual in him, although I could easily understand how it had developed, he turned it against the rock, and to my astonishment the solid mass seemed to fade away.

The consternation which his action caused among the animate balls was easily perceptible. They dashed madly around, losing all semblance to spheres as their appendages appeared and threshed about in all directions. Finally order seemed to be restored by the appearance of authority, although I could make out none who appeared to take the lead. But the effects of authority were manifest. The balls formed as though to protect a certain part of the mountain, and with a grunt of satisfaction Breinbar turned in that direction. I followed him, for the stimulus of action had restored me somewhat.

Relentlessly we plowed through their ranks, and strangely, the ray which issued from Breinbar's projector with power to annihilate the solid rock itself had no effect on those hellish balls. But if it did not, we ourselves did. While we suffered from the searing touch as they came into contact with us, our touch seemed a thousand times as terrible to them, for although their spirits seemed willing enough to die in opposing us, the agony of our touch was so excrutiating that it was unendurable, and as fast as they came into contact with us they would bound away, twisted into all the contortions of extreme agony. So in effect our progress was unopposed as we first forced our way through their ranks, then bit into the solid rock behind them with the ray.

After what seemed an infinity of slow progress into the depths of the old mountain, advancing into the tunnel which we were cutting into the living rock, we suddenly broke through into a blinding radiance. A blinding light, in which we blinked, unable to perceive the source of the radiance. Finally, adjusting our eyes to the unaccustomed glare, we advanced, and came upon It suddenly.

It was not what I had been prepared for. In fact I was unprepared for anything, certainly unprepared for a Thing which had no form. For It had no dimensions of any kind, at least none measurable by our standards. It was a blinding point of light, suspended in a great chamber, or at least, situated in the air in its center, with no visible means of support. One minute point of light; light which, while having no single color one could name, yet seemed to give the impression of all vivid colors. One tiny point of energy so great that it flooded a vast chamber of many million cubic feet with a radiance positively blinding, even at its confines exceeding the radiance of the noonday sun. After the first glance, which again blinded me for

the moment, I did not care to look at It directly again.

For it was quickly evident that the point of light was the Thing we sought. It spoke no language. How could a point of light without body or vocal organs speak? Yet we easily received the message It sent. And, conversely, Its answers, registered in our minds, showed that It understood our thoughts, though It had no ears to hear with. And as the realization of the fact came to me, I again thought to myself, "How can we contend with an Intelligence which reads our very thoughts?"

For It said, or at least the thought was communicated to us, "What do you expect to be able to do here?" And the thought echoed in my brain. "Nothing!"

The voiceless message went on: "Now that you have seen me, how do you expect to destroy me, whom you can not touch, nor injure with your machine, which is only contrived to annihilate matter such as you know it. It can not touch us."

"No." The voice of Breinbar startled me, as he spoke aloud, though the Thing had no ears. "But I have another weapon which can harm you."

"You mean could harm me if you could come close enough," the Intelligence seemed to reprove him. "You can not get close enough to get in range."

I saw by the sudden dejection which had come over my friend that what It said was so. The weapon, whatever it was, had a range far too limited to reach to the height of that dazzling point of light. We were limited by the necessity for something material to stand upon, while It was not.

The next words from the Thing, if I can call such thoughts words, were sickening with their revelation, even though what I had already seen must have prepared me for them. The thought came, "You want to know what we mean to do. We here in our situation in the universe find our state unsatisfactory. We see you and your world, so wonderful, and you living in it like brainless brutes. So we are trying, by the only means we have, to leave our world and enter yours. You must not think we are murderers. We are simply a higher form of life supplying our needs. You do not call it murder when you kill a steer for food, for clothing."

"Yes, I know what you are doing," Breinbar interrupted harshly. "But I will not grant the cases are parallel. We hold that you are not justified, either by your law or ours; that you are committing murder without the justification even of necessity, just to gratify a foolish wish which if allowed to become a fact will bring the destruction not only of us but of your race as well."

Again the answering thought came, irritably this time: "You forget that it is the law of the Maker himself, He whom you call God, Who directs all things, that there shall either be progress or death. This is progress."

And back came the answer from the man, with no slightest hesitation, "While you are talking of the Maker's law, why do you not remember that He created our worlds separate, closed all the normal means of communication from one to the other? Do you not think it was with a purpose? You think you can break those laws and not suffer? What about the one of your race who entered the body of the Scotchman, McIntosh? You know how he was changed to a devil incarnate. You can not break the law separating our worlds and escape. If you persist you can only bring destruction to all."

"Enough of this!" the answering thought was sharp with anger. "We will not argue. We are acting, and you can not prevent it. But in a

short time you, too, will be dead. We can not harm you now, but we can wait, while you can not. And I can wait very easily when the prize is your body, Breinbar." The meaning of that last sentence nauseated me, but it must have brought a different thought to Breinbar, for the Thing, reading his mind, warned sharply, "Don't think you can influence me in that manner."

And then began a debate even stranger than what had gone before. For I heard only one side of it, but there was no difficulty in supplying the missing side. Breinbar no longer spoke aloud, contenting himself with thinking.

"I warn you, you can not succeed," the thought came into my mind, from the Thing. A short pause, with Breinbar's rejoinder only having an existence in his mind and the Thing's. Then again the thought: "Oh yes, Breinbar. I should have thought of that. Your mind, joined with mine; it would be the richest acquisition I have known. But you are deceiving yourself if you think you will have power to sway my decisions. It is you who will be overwhelmed."

The meaning of it began to seep into my brain, and I turned to Breinbar with a start. "For God's sake, what are you going to do?" I asked, knowing in advance what the answer would be. And although I did know his answer, yet I could not repress the shudders of horror as he answered sharply.

"It is our only chance. I believe I can dissociate my own intelligence and join it with that Thing of intelligence. Then—well, we can see. We are lost if we don't; maybe lost if we do."

"But," I objected, "how are you going to do that?"

"I think I can. It will help me all It can, for it will always welcome such acquisitions. It said so plainly." He was silent a moment, then broke out suddenly, "Now you, you just concentrate on one thought. Whatever happens, keep willing that It have no control over you. Will as though your life depended on it, which it will, that your intelligence remain in your own body. Never drop the thought for a moment until it is over. Remember!"

"Yes, but you——" I was beginning again, but he interrupted me fiercely.

"Keep still! And hold that thought!"

The forcefulness of his utterance seemed to paralyze my faculties for the time. I was shaking as though with a violent attack of buck-ague, as I tried involuntarily to follow his instructions. But I could not, for suddenly I felt him go limp beside me and slump to the floor. Dropping to my knees I was horrified to find that there was no pulse to his body: he was as dead!

Then began a time which was the most terrible I ever experienced. The horror of the attack by the frozen body of the old Scotchman was nothing in comparison. I was not old at the time, only thirty-six, but when I returned finally from that experience under the bleak monadnock my hair was white and my hand shaking as with palsy.

At first I was unable even to imagine what was happening. The Light began to behave erratically, although I received no brain impulses from It such as It had sent before. It seemed to expand until it filled the entire room, then contract to the size of a pinpoint. Rhythmically it swelled and shrank, pulsating, and while I could not see clearly in the radiance, I did obtain the impression that the balls themselves recognized the strangeness of what was taking place. For they had arranged themselves in concentric circles, rank on

rank, centered about that spark of ultimate glory, and if they had possessed limbs which could have been designated "arms" I would have thought their attitude was that of prayer.

How long the horrible glory of that happening lasted I do not know. I was completely lost in it, forgetful of the admonition which Breinbar had given me. But the recall came with a shock. For suddenly it seemed there was something pulling at my senses, as though something were being drawn from my brain. With a burst of horror I remembered Breinbar's last words, and began to oppose my will to that which seemed to be bent on drawing the very life from my body.

And then It spoke again, while great drops of perspiration ran from my forehead into my eyes, cold though the chamber was with a cold like that of space. "You have lost!" the thought came clearly. "I have Breinbar here and he has been submerged. It would be better for you to come, for it would be for you eternal life as an intelligence. You must come!"

And still I fought against the idea, the Thing itself; my being revolting against the coming desecration of life. And—a sudden gleam of hope came as I seemed to hear dimly in my consciousness a smaller thought, encouraging. "Hold out! Hold out for a time!" And somehow I did hold out awhile. But there is a limit to the strain that human nerves can bear, and imperceptibly I slipped over the margin.

The remainder of the awful experience does not lie within the memory of observed fact. It has the seeming of a dream, a dream, however, of such convincing reality that I am firmly convinced that it happened in all of its impossible details. For I seemed to be looking down upon our bodies, mine and Breinbar's, which lay huddled in a heap against the wall, while in my consciousness was a veritable riot of conflicting thoughts.

The sickening realization seemed to come to me that I had failed and that my intelligence had been sucked out of my body into the being of that parasitic Thing of souls. As the nausea of that knowledge began to wear off I became conscious of some of the thoughts which were surging through the ether. And I was surprized to find that all was not harmony within that pool of intellect. For there were two factions, and as I began to get my bearings I recognized that the outstanding intellects among the pool still retained some of their individuality, and that, instead of all being drawn from that strange plane of life and matter, there were many that represented intelligences which had once had human form.

Then it became evident that the dominant faction which had argued so cavalierly with Breinbar had made another slip when It thought It could absorb and submerge his mind within Itself. For it soon developed that the other faction needed only the leadership which Breinbar now supplied to spur it into triumphant action.

The following time, hours maybe, or minutes, is indescribable. I can only chronicle its results. At last, after a space of time the length of which I have not the slightest idea of, harmony was again restored, and sanity with it. Realization had been forced even on the most radical element of the reservoir of intelligence that to pursue the mad course It had embraced would so disrupt the working of both worlds that all beings in both would inevitably be extinguished. But in the struggle I must confess I played the part of an onlooker.

And then quiet was restored, and Breinbar was again speaking to me in that mysterious wordless way. Only

one of us could return to life as we had known it, and he wanted me to to be the one. Frank terror in my awful surroundings combined with his arguments about my family, and I yielded.

So Charles Breinbar, greatest scientist of all, greater than any will ever know, passed on. And, lest you regard him as a pathetic figure, a martyr, let me insist that such is emphatically not the case..

For it is given to me, who knew him and his zest for adventure which drove him to penetrate the mysteries of nature farther than any man has ever done, to know that he did not die; that his intellect, he himself, now enjoys advantages which I should envy were I half so curious as he. And in the long evenings as I sit before the fire and talk with my Maida who was his daughter, I see him plainly, endowed now with powers which were denied even to him while prisoned in such a body as mine. And I am quite sure that when I am at work in my laboratory on the experiments which have made me world-famous, it is Breinbar who stands beside me, directing. For no brain but his could so directly and surely solve the problems which I have solved since that time when the Arctic Death threatened our existence as a race.

FOG-FACES

By ROBERT S. CARR

There is something more to fog than merely clammy water vapor—
  There are fat, pale, leering faces in the dark and lonesome places,
Where the gray-white little demons in the night-mists love to caper.

There's a Something gaunt and spectral that takes walks abroad in fog;
  'Tis uncertain, I will ween it; It is ghoulish—none have seen It,
But we who walk the woods at night have heard It in the bog.

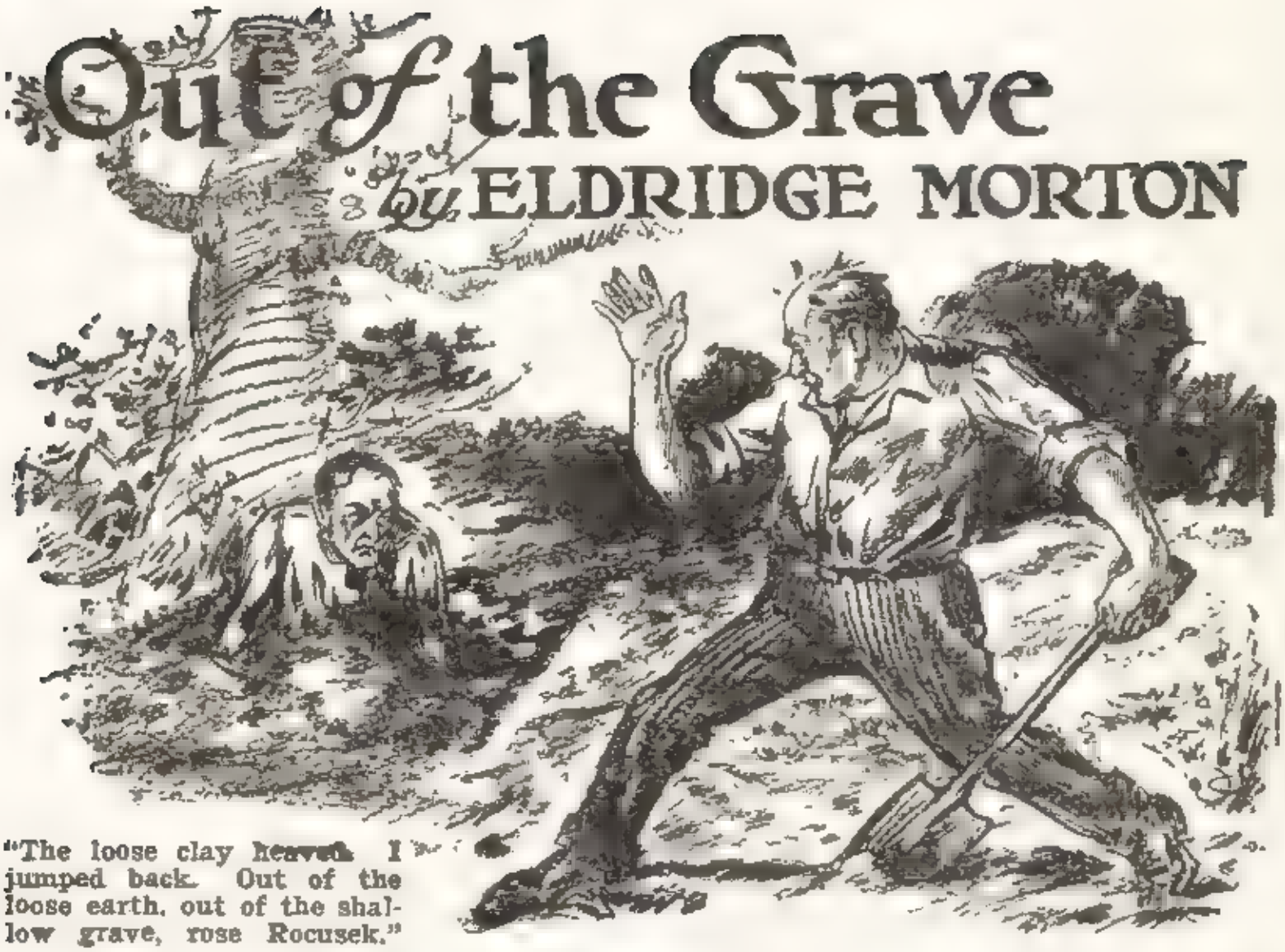
If you should go at midnight to a hidden lowland nook,
  Behind a moss-grown boulder where the wet leaves brush your shoulder,
And should crouch among the fog-swirls, and should watch and wait and look,

It would come, wrapped in Its garments of miasmal, damp gray steam;
  You could hardly say you hear It, yet you'd know that you were near It,
For you'd feel Its breath upon your cheek, and see Its eye-balls gleam.

And as it passed, the fog would twist like ghosts of little snakes;
  The faces would start leering, you would see their wet lips sneering,
As their Master, gaunt and spectral, stalked away through the cane-brakes.

Out of the Grave

by ELDRIDGE MORTON



"The loose clay heaved. I jumped back. Out of the loose earth, out of the shallow grave, rose Rocusek."

WOULD anyone engage a doctor who admitted that he had buried another patient alive? Especially when he admitted that he had buried the patient to hide the evidence of murder?

Hardly! That doctor would be looked on as a monster in human form. The world would shrink from him as it would shrink from a leper or from an unclean beast.

That is why I am revealing myself only as "Doctor X."

For I did that thing. I buried a man alive. I did it to shield myself from punishment for his murder.

Anyone else would have done the same thing, under the same circumstances. That's why I'm telling this story—this story of what actually took place in my own life. I want to show how appearances may put a man in the shadow of the hangman's noose.

I am a reputable physician. I was graduated from a medical school which is rated in "Class A" by the American Medical Association. I stood fifth from the top in the class of 1899.

Soon after I arrived in the city where I now live, on the banks of the upper Mississippi River, I acquired the enmity of a rival, whom I shall call Dr. Rocusek. Little did I know what horrible results his enmity was to bring upon me!

He was a man of peculiar nature, a mixture of a half-dozen European races. He was almost a genius in his profession, and had been highly educated, but his strange moods cost him many friends, and when I invaded his field many of his patients naturally drifted to me. Like myself, he was a specialist in nervous and mental diseases.

We met occasionally at social gatherings and at meetings of the county medical society, and month by month I found his attitude growing more and more bitter. Finally it reached the point where we were openly at war.

This silent warfare continued for three years, and all efforts on my part to heal the breach were rejected coldly.

Imagine my surprize, then, when the telephone rang one night as I was sleeping soundly after a busy day, and on answering I heard Dr. Rocusek's anxious voice: "Dr. X?"

"Yes."

"This is Dr. Rocusek, doctor. I am terribly sick. I'm afraid I'm dying. Please hurry as fast as you can."

I started to advise the man to call a general practitioner. I was a specialist in nerve diseases. But the receiver was banged on the hook, before I could speak.

Amazed that he should call me, I began dressing. If the man was as near death as he seemed to think, I could not let his past enmity keep me from helping him.

His house was a mile or so from my own, at the edge of the city, and I pushed my car to its limit. As a result, a motorcycle officer on late duty followed me and caught me at Rocusek's door.

"I've got no time to argue," I said shortly. "There's a man in here dying. I'm a doctor. Here's my card."

I handed it to him and ran up the steps.

Rocusek met me at the door.

"Come in! Come in!" he greeted me pleasantly, smiling cordially. He looked the picture of health, tall, sleek, well-fed, black-mustached, with a bow that a courtier might envy.

"How's this?" I demanded, startled to have him meet me. "I thought you were sick, dying!"

"Exactly," he said. "Exactly. But come in, doctor. It's cold for you to be standing there."

Bewildered, I stepped inside and set my medical bag in the hallway.

"See here," I began, "if you've got me out of bed on a night like this——"

He held up a hand, protesting.

"This is no joke, doctor," he said. "I am in deadly earnest. But please walk into the living room."

Angry to find that he had apparently called me out needlessly, I stalked into the living room and sat down to hear his explanation.

Rocusek followed me into the room and stood with his back to the fire, rubbing his hands and warming himself.

"It was a shame to call you out of bed at this time of the night," he said pleasantly.

I'm afraid I grunted.

"But the truth is, doctor," he went on, "that you will be well repaid for your trouble. You are going to witness something never seen before in this world."

I looked up, startled.

"Yes, doctor," he said, "you are going to be my partner in one of the most fantastic experiments ever undertaken.

"You may wonder why I am asking you to help me in this momentous experiment. The truth is, we have been bad friends long enough. I am ready to call quits. But besides that, I respect your medical ability highly, and I need your help.

"This may be a ghastly experiment to watch. But you are used to seeing people die. It will not upset you. And I want you to observe the effects——"

"See here, Rocusek," I broke in, "I haven't said I was going to help you. I'm not. I don't know what you're talking about. And I certainly don't enjoy being called out of bed at 2 a. m. to take part in some

asinine experiment. I'll say good-night."

I rose to go, but he stopped me.

"You can't go; you can't," he said forcefully, his dark eyes fixing themselves on mine. "You don't dare. I might die."

I grinned, for he looked the picture of health, but he went on hurriedly.

"When I heard you at the door, I swallowed the contents of this bottle. It is a deadly poison, a derivative of opium I discovered myself. Smell it."

He handed me the vial, and I put it to my nose. It had a bitter, acrid smell.

"I give you my word, doctor, this is no joke," he assured me.

Hesitatingly, I sat down again, and he began talking rapidly.

"The story is this," he said. "I must cut in short; I don't know how soon the poison will take effect.

"For many years, as you may have known, I have been trying to find some means of dissociating personality—separating mind and body.

"Think what it would mean! While my body lies in this room, my mind would travel to the ends of the earth in the flash of an eye, as quickly as my thoughts could direct it.

"Imagine it! We could see everything, travel everywhere, without moving from this room. We could talk to a friend in San Francisco or Hongkong without rising from our chair. Can you see the immensity of the idea?"

"Yes," I snapped. "It would be wonderful. But it can't be done."

"It can! It can!" he shouted. "This will do it." He shook the poison bottle aloft.

"I've found the drug. Opium, you known, partially releases the mind from the body. Yet the mind is not wholly free. It is still tied down.

"I conceived the idea of 'cracking' the atoms of opium—making it a hundred times more powerful. I worked at it for years. Finally I perfected it.

"But that wasn't enough. In that state it was rank poison. I wanted something that would keep life in the body while the soul—the mind—wandered at will.

"Now, I've found it! Another drug, mixed with the first one. I'm positive it will work. I'm betting my life on it. But it's not sure. There's a chance.

"I don't know what will become of me. I don't know whether I shall keep the voice you hear now, whether I shall see as I do now, whether I shall hear as I do now.

"Nor do I know how my body will be affected. Perhaps, when my mind leaves, my body will seem dead. Maybe it will seem to be in a coma.

"Those things I do not know. Those are the things you are to watch."

"This is madness," I interrupted. "Sheer madness. You will kill yourself. I refuse to take any part——"

I broke off in the middle of my sentence. Rocusek was dying before my eyes!

His face took on a deathlike pallor. Then there was a mighty convulsion that shook his whole body.

I leaped from my chair and rushed for my medical bag in the hallway. With frantic haste I raced through the hallway, madly punching the walls for the light buttons, until I reached the kitchen. It seemed hours before I had drawn the water to make a hypodermic of apomorphine—the most effective antidote.

I ran back to the front room.

Death met my eye!

I was certain of it. Rocusek lay huddled in a heap on the floor, thrown from his chair by one of his mighty convulsions.

I felt for his pulse as I pulled back the sleeve for the hypodermic. There was no pulse.

Cursing myself for letting the man die before my eyes I plunged the hypodermic needle into his arm.

There was a chance—just a chance—that I might not be too late. Some faintest flicker of his pulse might still remain, too faint for me to detect.

I shot down the plunger, forcing the apomorphine deep into his flesh.

I bent down and put my head to his chest. I listened desperately, determined that no slightest flicker of life should escape me. I would not abandon my efforts to save his life until he was unquestionably dead—dead beyond any hope of returning to life through the mysterious drug.

There was no sign of life. His heart had stopped. His breathing had stopped. His face had the waxy look that tells even the layman of death.

Still I did not give up my efforts. I filled the syringe once more, this time with a double dose of apomorphine. If this failed, he was dead beyond all hope.

I waited—in vain. How I cursed myself! To sit there like a fool, like a schoolboy listening to his tale of separating mind and body!

Why had I been such a fool? Why hadn't I held him, if necessary, while I injected an antidote?

I laughed aloud, bitterly. To sit quiet while a man deliberately killed himself!

I bent over once more and listened to his heart.

Silent!

I rose unsteadily to my feet. My hands were shaking as with ague.

I had seen death many, many times, but never had I been affected like this. Never before had I sat by and let a man die, watched him die and stirred no hand to aid him.

My whole body shook with excitement. I think I nearly fainted.

I lifted his body and carried it to a davenport at one side of the room. My thoughts were in a whirl. For a long time I stared at that waxy face, those strangely contorted limbs.

"He succeeded," I said to myself, grimly. "He has separated his body and soul, right enough."

Finally I shrugged my shoulders. He was dead. No question about it. Now what to do?

Obviously, I must notify the coroner. My eye glanced about the room for a telephone.

What would I tell him? Why, of course I would have to tell him that the man had died of opium poisoning.

It would have to be reported as a suicide, of course. Suicide. The motive——

What *had* been the motive? I wondered about that, rather idly. What would the papers say? Finances? Ill-health? Love?

None of these. Well, what *would* they say? That he had been hunting for a way to separate body and soul?

What a flimsy motive for a suicide! No one would believe that.

Suddenly a thought struck me: Would it be called suicide? My heart leaped into my mouth.

What reason was there for anyone to think he had committed suicide? He was in good health, apparently had some means, had suffered no misfortune in love.

Why should he commit suicide? As an experiment? Bosh!

I could see the scornful look on the faces of the coroner's jury.

Murder! That was it. Murder! "Dr. X killed him. They had been enemies. They'd had a quarrel. Doctor X gave him poison!"

I went cold all over. The sight of that waxy face threw me into a panic.

Murder! Already I could feel the noose tighten about my neck. I choked.

Fear made me leap to my feet. I would flee. Leave that damned body here. It was not my fault. I hadn't killed him.

I must escape. No one must see me go. The world would never know.

I grabbed my medical kit. Mustn't leave anything here. They would run me down, put me in jail, try to drag a confession out of me. Tell them it was an experiment? Rubbish!

I could see their faces now, sneering as I told them the man had killed himself. Ugly faces they were, policemen's faces—like that of the motorcycle officer that stopped me tonight.

That motorcycle officer! I stopped dead in my tracks, my hand on the door.

That motorcycle officer would know! He saw me come in! He saw Rocusek was alive then! And he had my card!

My mind was like a whirlwind. What way could I turn? How could I escape? Wherever I went they would track me down, put me in jail.

Hide the body!

That was the thing! Hide it where it would never be found! Burn it, throw it down a well, bury it!

No one would know what had happened to him. No one would know he was dead. No one would ever accuse me.

I looked out the window. It was dark yet. I could carry the body out the back way, then drive around and pick it up.

Take it far away. Bury it in some lonely spot. Somewhere no one ever went. That was the thing.

I wasted no time. I threw his heavy body onto my shoulder, the waxy face falling limply against my back. I stumbled with it through the hallway, out through the kitchen, onto the porch.

I dropped it in the shadows, then went through the house and got in the car.

In a few minutes I was speeding out the country road, as fast as the car would go, the body huddled in the back.

As we raced through the night, my foot crowding the accelerator against the floor-boards, my mind was working furiously.

Where was the loneliest place in the countryside? Where was there some spot of land no one would ever visit?

Bridge's Point!

The scene flashed into my mind. Ideal! A jungle of undergrowth, of swampy land, shoving its long neck far away from the road to make a bend in the river.

My heart leaped as the picture came to my mind. No one ever went there. It was ugly, damp, weedy. No picnic parties would stumble across the bones.

At the next turn I swung the car south, on the road to Bridge's Point. Give me a half-hour more and I would be free of that clammy body, huddled up there in the back.

I felt like sinking for joy.

Somebody spoke.

"Would you mind putting me back on the seat? My arms are a bit cramped."

Chills raced through my body. The car leaped to the side of the road, almost turned over before my foot could find the brake.

I turned my head. There, in the seat beside me, sat Rocusek!

I was paralyzed by fear. I thought the man had come to life, risen from the dead.

I looked into the back seat.

There, on the floor, was Rocusek—his body—the man I had seen die!

I looked again at the man beside me. The same! Both were Dr. Rocusek!

Terror froze my throat. I could not speak. The man beside me sneered, laughed wickedly.

"You wonder how I got here? Did you forget it was an experiment? That I am not dead?"

I was silent. I tried to speak. The words would not come.

"I can cross the world in the flash of an eye," he laughed. "While you sat there, in my house, watching my body, I was at the telephone, calling police. I told them who I was, told them you had given me poison, that I was dying.

"You fool! You walked into my trap like an innocent babe. For months I had planned this revenge. You thought you were so clever, winning all my patients away from me. I waited until my plans were ready. Then I called you tonight. And you walked into the trap!

"They're hunting for you now. The police are scouring the town, the roads for miles around. I've been watching them, flying from one road to another on their heels.

"You can't escape them. They'll be here soon. They'll find you with my body. Then——"

He broke off in a laugh. A sneering, mocking laugh.

For a moment I was silent, stupefied. Then rage filled my heart, gave me strength.

"You fiend!" I yelled. "You fiend of hell!"

His grin mocked me.

"They'll find me, will they?" I screamed in frenzy. "They'll find your body? Let them try! They'll have a long hunt!

"You want to know what I'm going to do with it? I'll tell you! I'm going to bury it. Dig a grave by the river bottoms. Throw your damned body into it, cover it with sticky swamp clay. Smooth it over the top, spread branches and twigs on it, hide it forever. And let it rot."

In the moonlight I saw the smile leave that evil face. I saw the skin go white. I knew I had thrown fear into that—that "mind."

This touch of victory turned my head. I almost laughed in his face as I yelled: "Then you can squirm and fight. Try to get out of that sticky grave."

I laughed loudly, hysterically. "A long rest you'll have, your 'mind' running around like a lost sheep."

Rocusek—the spirit—grinned again.

"You forget," he said, "I can talk to police as well as to you. I can tell them where my body is buried. They can find it—find it dead."

"You fool!" I shrieked with laughter. "Poor fool! How can a murdered man walk into the police station, tell them he's dead? They'd roar at you, call you crazy."

I laughed loudly, crazily.

The man beside me was silent, slumped back in his seat.

I threw the car into gear, began driving furiously toward the river.

When Rocusek spoke again his voice shook, but he laughed, nervous, afraid.

"Well, I guess the joke has gone far enough, doctor," he said.

"Joke?" I didn't understand.

"Why, of course," he answered, laughing more loudly now. "Of course it was a joke. Just a joke. When I saw how perfectly the experiment worked, I couldn't resist the temptation to play a joke on you."

"A joke, eh?" It was my turn to sneer now. "Was it a joke to set police on my trail?"

My laugh rose high above the wind that whistled past us.

"The joke's on you, Dr. Rocusek," I roared. "Here's the end of the road. See if you can play any jokes under six feet of clay."

I roared at my own wit.

I stopped the car at the side of the road, turned off the lights.

In the tool-box I found a tiny spade, one that had helped me out of many a mudhole.

"For God's sake, doctor," screamed Rocusek, "you aren't serious?"

"You'll soon see!"

I opened the tonneau door, pulled the body onto my shoulder. Even then I wondered why it wasn't stiff. It was cold and clammy, but rigor mortis had not set in. That was the only sign that life remained.

I dragged it out of the car. There was a cry of pain.

"Look out! You're twisting my arm!" screamed the man—the mind—that stood beside me.

I dropped the arm of the body, and the man beside me sighed in relief.

"I still feel everything," moaned the mind, the spirit, of Dr. Rocusek.

I set off briskly through the tangled underbrush.

"For God's sake, doctor," he groaned. "It was a joke, I tell you, a joke!"

I laughed, madly, insanely. It was my turn now.

For a quarter-mile I struggled through twisting, thorny bushes, stumbled over hummocks of grass, ran against tree branches.

Unceasingly, the spirit-man at my side pleaded, prayed for mercy. From time to time he cried out in pain as a thorn or a branch tore the skin of the body that I carried over my shoulder.

"You can't understand, doctor," he moaned. "I'm as alive as you are. I feel every pain that body feels. But this part of me—my mind—has no body. I can not fight with you, touch you. Have mercy! Lay my body here in the swamps! When the poison leaves I can enter it again."

"And let the police find it, hang me for it?" I yelled savagely. "Not much!"

Now I could see the river ahead, glistening in the moonlight. Soon we were near its banks. Here was the spot.

I dumped the body to the ground. The spirit-man groaned with pain.

I set to work digging the grave. The clay was soft and spongy. It was no work at all to dig in it.

The spirit-man raved with fear, watched every spadeful I threw out.

No words can tell the anguish that was in his voice as he pleaded for mercy, promised me anything, everything, if I would only leave that body on the river bank, in the open air.

His pleadings maddened me, made me work the harder. I think I was partly insane as I dug that grave.

At last it was finished. I picked up the body, threw it heavily into the shallow pit.

The spirit screamed.

"My arm! You've broken my arm!"

The spirit was on its knees now, wringing its hands, begging for life.

I laughed, threw a huge spadeful of the sticky clay on that ghastly, pallid face.

Rocusek groaned piteously.

"Kill me, doctor! Crush my head with that spade. But don't bury me!"

I threw another spadeful into the grave.

"Kill me, doctor! Kill me outright! Don't torture me!"

Another spadeful.

"Ugh! For God's sake! For *God's* sake. I'm choking. The clay is in my mouth! Ugh! It's in my throat! Mercy! Pity!"

Another spadeful!

"Give me a minute to live! One minute, for God's sake! The drug is leaving me. It's leaving! I'm going to be myself again!"

I looked at the spirit-man, kneeling beside that grave, wringing his hands, trying to wrap his spirit arms about my legs.

He seemed mistier, hazier. Even before my eyes he seemed to be dissolving.

Frantically I plunged my spade into the clay, threw spadeful after spadeful into that shallow grave.

"One minute! One minute!" screamed the shade.

It was almost gone now. I could hardly see the man's outlines.

More clay! I heaped it into the grave with frantic haste.

What was that? The earth in that grave seemed to move! I threw more dirt in, working like a madman.

The loose clay heaved. I jumped back.

Out of the loose earth, out of the shallow grave, rose Rocusek!

His face was contorted with anguish and rage. He snorted, blew the dirt from his nose, spat it out of his mouth. His left arm, the broken one, hung limp at his side.

I swung the spade at that swarthy head. I missed.

He leaped onto the firm ground, grabbed at the spade with his one good hand.

He threw his body on mine, crushed me to the earth. We wrestled, struggling for the spade. My grip loosened.

His fist crashed into my face. Something—the spade—almost shattered my skull. Darkness came flooding across my eyes and I knew no more.

It was hours later—broad daylight—when I came to my senses. My head seemed to be split wide open.

I raised my hand to my head. When I brought it away it was covered with sticky, clotted blood and clay.

I tried to recall what had happened. I remembered digging the grave, throwing that body in it, seeing it rise up to fight me.

What a nightmare! What a horrible nightmare!

But—there was the grave. In the soft clay were the marks of Rocusek's heavy, blunt-toed shoes.

My head throbbed. I had not got that in a dream!

I struggled to my feet, looked about for Rocusek, or his body. Nothing in sight.

My head throbbing like a trip-hammer, I staggered the quarter-mile back to the road. There was my car. Apparently he had been afraid to take it.

Wearily, racked by pain and horror, I drove back to town. All day I remained at home, nursing my swollen head.

That evening the door-bell rang, and I answered it.

It was Dr. Rocusek.

"I've come to thank you for your medical assistance last night," he said, smiling. "We've been enemies too long. I want to sign a truce."

He held out his hand.

It was his left hand. His right hand was in a sling!

The LEFT EYE

by Henry S. Whitehead

"The spider was as large as a prize peach, with great, waving, metal-like mandibles."

PIERRE GODARD was a French Canadian by descent, whose grandfather had departed the purlieus of Montreal for the good of his miserable hide in the days of Riel's Rebellion and settled in that indefinite area of scanty-soiled farmland along the western shore of Lake Champlain between Keeseville and Plattsburg.

The degenerate stock of the Godards, long impoverished since the era of its plebeian origins in France, did not recover in the descendants of the original fugitive. Pierre, the grandson, combined in his make-up the native cussedness of the lower class "canuck" with the skinflint qualities which his lifelong residence among the narrow-minded yokels with whom he consorted had readily imparted. Shiftless, furtive, mean-souled, he eked out an existence on his few barren acres of poor land which was endurable only because there was neither in his heredity nor his experience any better standard by which he could realize to the full the utter meanness of everything that conspired to make up his life's record.

At nineteen Pierre had married Katie Burton, a flat-chested, sallow-faced slattern of his own age. At the end of five years of sordid married life, four brats of their begetting littered up the dirty kitchen of Pierre's cabin through the long, cold days of the northern New York winter, and spent their summers rolling about in the dirt at the roadside and making faces at the occupants of the automobiles which passed in a wavering, irregular string, all day and most of the early evening, along the State road between Keeseville and Plattsburg.

That is, there were four brats—and Kathleen. To what ancestor of Pierre or Katie Kathleen could have been a "throw-back" is one of those obscure ethnic mysteries which are so baffling when they emerge in the families of recognized people. In Kathleen's case, it baffled no one, since there was no one in particular to remark this fairy among the ugly gnomes who pretended to be her brothers and sisters, this glorious little swan among the rough ducklings of the Godard brood.

Kathleen had always been utterly different from the rest. By the time she was six or seven, her positive characteristics were already strongly developed. She stood out from the rest of her sordid family like a new-minted gold coin among pocket-worn pennies. By natural choice, and habitually, she was dainty and neat. Dirt never stuck to her, somehow. The rest of the brood were different from each other only in the varying ugliness of their budding dispositions and the equally variant qualities of their general detestability of appearance and habit. All the rest, for example, would fight at the drop of the hat to gain possession of anything that turned up unappropriated, that even vaguely suggested value to their joint scrutiny. In these snarling contests, Kathleen, coolly aloof, was uninterested. The rest possessed in common that coarse, scrubby hair of indeterminate color which characterizes the children of outdoor-living peasants the world over. Kathleen's, a shimmering glory of delicate ringlets, shone burnished copper in the afternoon sun when she swept off the rickety back porch or daintily threw a few grains of hard corn to Pierre's scraggly hens.

At sixteen she was as coolly aloof from the blandishments of the coarse young men of her neighborhood as ever she had been to the scrambling bickerings of her family. All such advances left her wholly uninterested. What dreams and aspirations lay behind those clear blue eyes, those eyes like the blue of the Caribbean at noon, no one had ever guessed, that is, no one except the good priest, Father Tracy, who came over from one of the neighboring towns for mass every Sunday morning, and on alternate Saturday nights and before First Fridays, to hear the confessions of this outlying portion of his difficult flock. To Father Tracy it had been for some time clear that the lovely body of the little Kathleen harbored one of those rare souls, delicate and fragrant, which burn with the desire to offer themselves wholly to the Love of God. Here, the good father knew, or strongly suspected, was a budding vocation for the religious life, a vocation which it was one of his rewards to cultivate and foster.

As yet Kathleen was too young to leave her home, even if that had been feasible, and enter upon a novitiate with the good sisters at Plattsburg, or, perhaps better still, in her case, with some other good sisters much farther away from the place of her sordid origins, but for this vocation, as he watched it grow, at first weak and trembling up toward the dim light of a possible fulfilment, then later with a kind of thin, but pure and steady flame, Father Tracy said many novenas of thanksgiving. It was one of his chief sources of happiness, and, as was natural in such cases, Kathleen responded to his interest in her, and through his gentle, kindly leading of her soul, was beginning, as she fulfilled her maturity, to see the distant light more and more clearly.

This vision she cherished with all her heart, and if it begot in her an almost perceptible wistfulness, it did nothing to minimize the cheerful

kindliness with which she went about the performance of her daily tasks, or the cultivated discretion with which she had laboriously learned to meet and neutralize the changeable moods of her vicious father and slatternly, loose-minded mother.

THE wind-swept habitation for God which she had made of her pure little heart was rudely battered on a certain Thursday morning in the month of August in her seventeenth year.

Pierre, her father, who combined with the shiftless existence of a small peasant-farmer the more adventurous and profitable avocation of a bootlegger's runner for a Plattsburg operator, was frequently away from home at night and even for days at a time, when he was engaged in doing his part in bringing consignments of illicit merchandise down from unknown points in nearby Canada, either overland along the State road or by devious and rutted byways, or, what was an easier though somewhat less direct method much favored by "the profession," "up" the lake on dark nights, a process which was more lucrative because there were less people to bribe, and correspondingly somewhat more dangerous, as requiring a landing on the shores of Vermont across the lake, or somewhere on the New York side.

He had been away on one of these expeditions for two days, and had returned sometime during the small hours Wednesday night. On that Thursday morning, after two nearly sleepless nights, unkempt, ugly as a bear with a sore nose, he pushed his way into the kitchen about 9 o'clock and demanded something to eat.

Kathleen brought him his food and he ate in a brooding silence. She waited, sitting on the step below the open doorway, for him to finish, so that she might wash his dishes and tidy up the table after him, softly humming a tuneless little song, her mind entirely otherworldly.

Pierre, having finished his breakfast, came straight to the point of a certain matter which he had been cogitating for several weeks.

"Come here," he said.

She rose and came to the table, expecting that he required another cup of coffee or something of the sort.

"Shut the door," barked her father.

She closed the door leading into the small hallway out of the kitchen, wonderingly, and returned to her father's side.

"How old are you?" he asked, looking at her as though he were appraising her.

"Seventeen."

"Seventeen, eh?" His eyes went over her again, in such fashion that, without knowing why, she felt suddenly choked.

"Ah, seventeen. Old enough! Now listen. That is old enough. You are going to marry Steve Benham. I got that all fixed, see. Me an' him, we talk about it a lot, and Steve is all right for it."

The choking feeling nearly overcame her. The blood seemed to suffuse her whole body and then recede somewhere, leaving her icy cold and afraid. Marriage had never entered Kathleen's mind. And Steve Benham! Benham was a brutal-faced young tough who, with greater advantages such as are offered to the denizens of great cities in their worst aspects, might have shone as a criminal of the lower type — a yegg, a killer for hire, the ready and effective tool of some brutal organized gang. As it was, he had taken advantage of such opportunities as presented themselves to his somewhat restricted field of develop-

ment. He was one of Levine's crowd in the bootlegging operations, a close associate of Pierre Godard's.

"What the hell's the matter with you, now?" roared Pierre, curbing his voice slightly in view of his desire for secrecy. This was his lookout, and none of Katie's business. He could handle his own girl all by himself without his wife's having any part in it. Benham had offered him two hundred dollars to put it through for him, and that two hundred he meant to have,—as soon as possible, too.

"Steve's all right, ain't he? What's the matter with Steve? Now cut out this blubberin'." Kathleen's lips were trembling in a colorless face, her eyes big and bright with the tears she was forcing to remain unshed. She knew the resources of this brute of a father which an inscrutably unkind Providence had inflicted upon her.

Pierre, his anger mounting by leaps and bounds, glared at her, his ugly face rendered hideous by a savage snarl, his clenched hand showing white at the knuckles as he gripped the table's edge.

"O daddy, I can't, I can't!"

Kathleen's restraint had broken down under this unexpected and crushing blow. She sank down in a chair at the side of the table, and buried her lovely head in her hands, her body shaken with convulsive sobs.

This weakening aroused all the half-latent brute in Godard. With a savage curse, he seized Kathleen by the hair, dragging her face up from the table, and with the back of the other hand dealt her several cruel and heavy blows.

She sank, as she shrank away, to the floor, a shuddering heap of misery and pain.

Pierre rose, his anger partially allayed, and looked down at her. He kicked her, but lightly, in the side.

"Get up out of that, an' get to hell out of here and clean yourself up. Steve's comin' in about noon, an' I'm goin' to tell him it's all set for him. Don't you dast do nothin' to spoil it, neither, you hear? Now git up, an' beat it along an' get yourself prettied up."

He seized her roughly by the shoulder, dragged her to her feet, and shoved her through the door into the hallway.

Upstairs in her tiny little room, she lay across the bed, bruised and shaken, trying to collect her wits. One refuge and one only occurred to her, for even under the stress of this unexpected manifestation of her father's known brutality she had no idea of giving in to his demand and receiving Steve Benham as a suitor.

Trembling, shaken in every fiber of her delicate body, but with her almost unformulated resolve burning within her like a bright, strong flame, she dragged herself resolutely to her feet, and began painfully to change her clothes. She had decided to go to Father Tracy for protection.

An hour later, very softly, she crept downstairs. It was past 10 o'clock, and she would have to manage to elude her mother. Her brothers and sister had not been about the house, she remembered, since their breakfast time. Her mother would be below. She had been out in the chicken-yard when her father had come into the kitchen for his breakfast. He had gone out immediately after she had come upstairs, probably to report progress to Benham! She shuddered, and crept down the stairs like a mouse.

She could hear her mother aimlessly pottering about in the kitchen. She slipped out of the seldom-used front door and out to the gate and along the road. As she turned the first corner, she met her sister

Eunice, walking beside one of the town-boys.

"Where you goin' all dressed up?" enquired Eunice, her pert face alive with interest in this unexpected apparition of Kathleen in her best dress and Sunday hat. Kathleen bit her lip. This was a wholly unexpected, an entirely unavoidable, misfortune. She was utterly unused to deceit. The truth was her only resource.

"I have to go over to Villanova to see Father Tracy," she replied simply. Eunice's eyes opened wide in astonishment. She said nothing, and Kathleen, walking as rapidly as she could, passed the couple and continued on her way.

It was not until noon that Eunice arrived home, and Kathleen, with two hours' start, could not be overtaken.

GODARD, on hearing of his daughter's destination, was, for the time being, nonplussed. He would have to think this over. It was a wholly unexpected move on Kathleen's part. Cursing her in his black heart, he betook himself, accompanied by a fresh bottle of Levine's commodity, to the barn, and spent the afternoon in consultation with the bottle.

About 5 o'clock, having had a brief nap, and awaking in an uglier mood than ever, he came back to the house for another bottle, and with that he disappeared until dark. He did not come into the house for his supper, and to the summons of his son Ernest he replied only with such fervent curses that Ernest, edified, returned to the house to warn the rest of the family to leave the "old man" alone.

About 10 o'clock, alone, he set out in his Ford car. The family heard him go, but this meant nothing to them. They were used to his blind rages and to his goings and comings at all hours.

Exercising that kind of low cunning which he had inherited from his disreputable ancestors and which had served him well in his many evasions of the officers of the law of the State of New York, he did not drive through the neighboring small village where Kathleen had met her sister walking, but took a devious way through obscure mountain roads to Villanova, the larger town which lay several miles inland from the lake shore and where Father Tracy lived.

He left his Ford several rods up a wood road at the foot of a mountain near the edge of the town, and threaded his way through the more obscure streets in the direction of the rectory.

Very few people were abroad, but when he arrived at the edge of the back-yard of the parochial residence he observed with a certain satisfaction that the house was lighted in what he supposed to be the pastor's study on the first floor.

He had brought the automatic pistol which always accompanied his professional journeys over the Canadian border, but his ride in the pure Adirondack night air, and the necessity for concentration in driving over the rough mountain roads, had dissipated the effects of the two bottles of cut whisky which he had consumed, to that degree that as he approached the house with murder in his black heart, he did so with all the native cunning he possessed keyed to the last notch, and, indeed, in a state of almost preternatural caution. But within him, unleashed, burned the evil fires of rage, disappointment, and hatred against his daughter and this good priest, which had seared and hardened his evil soul to the point where he would stop at nothing.

Under the stress of this stimulation, he decided suddenly not to use the pistol, and he looked about the yard for a suitable weapon. The

devil placed one to his hand. There, near the back porch, lay an ideal club, a section of thin gas-pipe left that very day by the local plumber who had fitted a new section to the hand-pump which supplied the kitchen. He picked up the pipe, which was about two feet in length, and balanced it in his hand, a devilish grin contorting his bleared features.

Very softly he approached the house on the side which lay in shadow, and took his stand under the lighted study window. Cautiously he raised himself to a level with the lower edge of the window, and peered through the transverse aperture left by an imperfectly pulled-down shade.

Kathleen sat with her back to him, within two feet of the open window. On the other side of the table sat the priest. Kathleen was speaking. He craned his neck to listen, his teeth now, unconsciously, bared.

"I think it would be better for me to go to the convent out there in the West, Father," she was saying, "for as you say, the farther away I go the safer I would feel."

The priest made some reply, of acquiescence and approval, unintelligible to Godard, who was now busily engaged in removing with the delicate touch of a repairer of watches, the fasteners from the wire screen which separated him from his prey.

It came out in his hands without a sound, and before the priest had finished his remark, Godard was in the room. Cursing frenziedly, though still softly, for he was still under the influence of his cautious obsession, he sprang like a tiger through the window, and with one terrific blow had crushed his daughter's lovely head like an eggshell.

Father Tracy, overcome with horror and momentarily helpless in the face of this berserk attack out of the calm mediocrity of his side-yard, was the next victim. With unspeakable blasphemies on his crusted lips, foam in the corners of his mouth, Godard was upon him, and the iron bar fell again and again until all human semblance was gone and a heap of huddled pulp on the rapidly crimsoning floor of his quiet study was all that remained mortal of the kindly priest of God.

Then, shivering under the fearful reaction of his holocaust, Godard, exercising the last remaining power of the stimulation of his low cunning, blew out the lamp, and as silently as a shadow slipped out through the opened window onto the grass beneath.

He turned back along the shadow of the house, but before he had reached the open yard behind, he bethought him abruptly of the detached wire screen which he had left leaning against the side of the house. He returned, catlike, and busied himself with refastening it. Just as he snicked home the last of the four patent fasteners, footsteps approached along the sidewalk from the farther side of the house, and he crouched like an animal against the side of the house in deep, protecting shadow. The footsteps, accompanied by two unconstrained voices, and punctuated by raucous laughs, continued past the house. Godard held his breath until it seemed to burn within his breast, and, furtively, catlike, watched with unwinking, small eyes the two uncertainly-outlined figures pass the house. At last they were gone, and noiselessly he slipped again along the side of the house in the protecting shadow, and disappeared in the tangle of weeds at the end of the yard.

Again, by back streets, he threaded his way tortuously toward the mountain road where he had concealed his car. As he stepped cautiously out onto the main road which led into the village of Villanova, he

almost ran into two large men who were standing, smoking silently, at the roadside. Involuntarily he stopped, and the two turned toward him. A blinding flash dazzled his eyes as one of the men turned the gleam of an electric flashlight in the direction of the furtive shape which had broken in upon their meditation. At once Godard was recognized.

It was the two men who had passed the rectory while he was replacing the wire screen in the window. Both hailed him by name.

"What you a-doin' 'way out here this time o' night, Pierre?" came the full bass of Martin Delaney.

"Goshamighty! Thought you was a ghost or somep'n!" It was the squeaky voice of Louis Le Grand.

Shaking in abject terror, the stimulation of his blood-lust entirely dissipated and no longer supporting him, Pierre Godard could only stand, his knees shaking and knocking, and goggle back at his interlocutors. At last, after the passage of several moments, and a new look, one of curiosity, had implanted itself on the faces of the two countrymen. Godard managed to gasp, in a dry throaty voice, not at all like his own, something about a piece of business here in Villanova; and not waiting to ascertain what effect his unusual preoccupation might have upon Delaney and Le Grand, he hastened at a kind of shambling trot down the main road toward his hidden car.

Both Delaney and Le Grand were very much mystified at Godard's unusual behavior. The two cronies, commonly bereft of all but the usual topics of local conversation, which were anything but interesting, made the most of this mild mystery. Therefore it was very firmly implanted in their rather obtuse minds that there could be only one possible author of the horrible crime which had been committed in the rectory, when the little town buzzed and seethed with it the next morning.

By 10 o'clock of that Friday, a posse was out after Godard, under the direction of a deputy sheriff and equipped with three automobiles, and had traced him as far as Willsboro Point by an imperfection in one of his tires, when the search was abruptly terminated by finding the car itself, which he had abandoned at the side of the Point road, at the intersection of another road which led down to the shore of the lake. It did not require more than the very average intelligence of deputy sheriff Maclear to come to the obvious conclusion that he had got across the lake and into Vermont, a conclusion corroborated by the statement of an irate resident camper who had been searching during the past hour and a half for a missing St. Lawrence skiff in which the camper had planned to go perch-fishing that morning, and which could nowhere be discovered.

The posse drove back to Willsboro station, and notified the Vermont authorities at Burlington, by telegraph. Then deputy sheriff Maclear reported to his superior, who got in touch with Albany asking requisition papers on the governor of the State of Vermont for a fugitive who had, the night before, brutally murdered his own daughter and a blameless priest of God.

But the Vermont authorities, although they took due action upon the telegraphed information, which contained an exact description of Godard, failed signally to get on the track of the fugitive from justice who had left the New York shore, unmistakably, from Willsboro Point. Every usual precaution was taken, and for some time it was surmised that Godard, familiar with the lake shores from a lifetime of contiguous residence and from his professional activities as a rum-runner, had man-

aged to land on the Vermont side and make his escape into the mountains. The greatest puzzle was what could have become of that St. Lawrence skiff which he had discovered so opportunely.

Some of the clearer-headed of those who set themselves to solve this problem came to the conclusion that Godard, desiring to conceal from his pursuers the point of his departure inland in Vermont, had scuttled the boat near the shore's edge, which he could easily have managed, either by smashing a hole or two after landing, weighting down the skiff with rocks, and shoving her out into the deep waters of the lake; or by doing the scuttling before landing, and swimming ashore. At any rate there was, on the Vermont side, no trace either of the fugitive or of the delicate little vessel in which he had left the New York side.

As GODARD sped away from the vicinity of Villanova it required from him every particle of concentration he could summon to drive at all. He opened up his dingy little car, which had, despite its battered appearance, an excellent engine, and hitting the high spots of the twining, rough mountain roads, he concentrated every effort in the blind urge to put as many miles as possible between himself and the scene of his horrible crime.

It was only when after several miles of incredible bumping and swaying he had reached a State road, that a definite objective for his flight began to take form in his harassed and befuddled mind. As he gave fragmentary thought to this pressing problem, something of his native low-cunning reasserted itself. His evil mind began to function. It first became plain to him that he could not return to his squalid home. He had been seen, and recognized. His one hope was that the crushed and mangled bodies of his unfortunate victims might not be discovered until morning.

There was no good reason why they should be discovered. The priest, as he knew very well, lived alone except for a superannuated old woman who was his housekeeper, and this ancient crone had unquestionably retired for the night long before his arrival in Villanova. Being ancient, and decrepit, she could be trusted to sleep through everything until morning. Barring a night-call for Father Tracy, the chances were excellent that the bodies would not be discovered until sometime the next morning. It was now a little after midnight. It would be light around 4 o'clock. He had something like four hours to work in.

He speeded up the car along the lake shore southward. He would go "up the lake" — as the southerly direction, for some inexplicable reason, was called, locally — away from Canada. Canada had been his first lucid thought; but that, as he reasoned cunningly, would necessitate a wide detour or else passing through Plattsburg, and he wished to risk neither the loss of time, nor the dash through a good-sized city, even at 1 o'clock in the morning. Therefore he turned south, in the direction of Essex.

As he neared Willsboro, the town just north of Essex, a brand-new idea occurred to him. By abandoning his car somewhere hereabouts, he could get an earlier start for crossing the lake into Vermont. With every mile he traveled, the lake narrowed, but straight across from Willsboro it would be only four miles, and, he reasoned, he would rather be out on the lake in the dim dusk of early morning than attempting to conceal his car and steal a boat in anything approaching daylight.

Some early-morning fisherman would be sure to see him!

A little past the Willsboro railroad station, therefore, his idea having begotten another, in his cunning brain, this time something in the nature of an inspiration, he turned his car sharply to the left, grinning evilly as he acted upon his newest hunch, and ran back, nearly at right angles with his previous course, down upon Willsboro Point. This is a peninsula, several miles in length, running northeasterly—a section of fine farmland in the center, its two shores thickly populated by summer campers, city people for the most part. No one, pursuing, would ever imagine that he had turned off, he reasoned. Besides, the city people at the camps had canoes, and in a canoe, from somewhere near the Point's end, he could, with the greatest ease, make his unseen way out to one of the Four Brother Islands, conceal the canoe in some dense thicket of underbrush, and effectually hide out. There were, too, lake-gulls' eggs in abundance on the islands, and no one would suspect, until it was too late, that he had done otherwise than attempt to make his escape, either into Canada (his own first idea) or across the lake into Vermont.

The car was his immediate problem, but there was no way of solving that. There was, as he well knew, no water along the shore deep enough to permit his sending it at full speed over the edge into the lake, and so hiding it effectually.

He left it directly in the road, and slunk down to the lake shore at his right in search of a canoe.

His luck held. At the very first camp he reached he found not only canoes but a St. Lawrence skiff, a staunch type of boat, round-bottomed, sharp-nosed at both ends, a boat capable, like a canoe, of being managed with a light paddle, but although equally fast, infinitely stauncher and less dangerous than any canoe.

Silently he launched out into the lake, and with swift, yet noiseless paddle-strokes shot his stolen skiff out into the black darkness in the direction of the Four Brothers. . . . .

These islands, "*Les Isles des Quatre Vents*" of the *voyageurs*, are old haunts of the lake smugglers. They lie, from the viewpoint of one approaching them directly from the Point shore, in the order of a mouth, nose, and two eyes, roughly speaking. The nearest, called "the mouth," was sighted after a few minutes of vigorous paddling by Godard, who passed it to the right or southerly direction. It had upon it a cabin, former residence of the keeper of the gulls, which are protected by state law. Godard was not looking for the comforts of cabins! He passed "the nose," a low-lying, swampy island, and paddled on to the island which would correspond to the left eye. This, the most rarely visited of the islands, infested with gulls, presents, like its fellow "eye," a precipitous shore all around, and is heavily forested with evergreens and thick, virgin underbrush.

GUIDED precisely by the noise of the gulls, which are constantly bickering, and then by his own keen eyesight, Godard carefully navigated the little island, finally landing and drawing the skiff into a tiny bay which was little more than a cleft in the guano-covered rocks. He concealed the skiff, despite the darkness, with immense cleverness, and began the difficult ascent of the cliff.

At last, bruised, spent, and befouled with guano, he reached the summit, and half walked, half crawled through the tangled underbrush toward the almost impenetrable center.

In his ascent he had disturbed countless nesting gulls, and their din,

to his strained and tautened nerves, was distracting, but the increased noise did not trouble him. The gulls were always at it, day and night, and such an increase would not be heard a mile and a half away on the sleeping Point. It was, curiously enough, the spider webs that really annoyed him. Undisturbed for centuries, these midnight spinners had worked and spun and plundered the air without hindrance.

As Godard pushed his precipitous way up the rocks and then again through the almost impenetrable underbrush, he was constantly brushing away long, clinging webs, which crossed and recrossed before his face and neck, and about his scratched and bleeding hands and wrists.

As he penetrated farther and farther toward the slightly conical center of the little island, it seemed to him that both the restraining pressure and the clinging tenacity of the webs were on the increase, but his native wit assured him that this impression was due to his fatigue and the reaction from the enormous amount of bad whisky he had imbibed during the afternoon.

He was, indeed, in the very depths of reactive depression. He cursed softly and bitterly, with a despairing note of self-pity, as the webs, ever thicker and stronger, as it seemed, appeared almost to reach out after him, to bar his way to effectual concealment.

At last, trembling in every limb, the salt sweat running into his parched mouth, shaking and weak, he observed that he was stepping slightly downhill. His progress since leaving the upper edge of the cliff had been slightly ascending. He had reached the approximate center of the island.

Wearily he paused, and almost sobbing out his bitter curses, tore fretfully, with trembling fingers, at a great mass of thick, silky web that had attached itself to his mouth.

As he looked about him through the darkness, and felt with his hands for a comparatively level place on which to sit down, he almost shrieked. He had put his hand down on something feathery, soft, and yielding to the touch. He looked, horrified, at the ground. Gibbering in mortal terror, he drew a box of matches from his pocket, and, cupping his hands, cautiously drew one across the side of the box. The flare of the safety-match revealed something white. He looked closer, stooping near the ground and carefully guarding the flame of his match, and he saw that it was the body of a gull.

Something, he thought, something that seemed as big as his two fists, scampered away through the underbrush, awkwardly, a lumpish kind of thing. A mink, or weasel, his reason reassured him.

The match went out, burning his fingers, and a pall of sudden blackness fell upon him. Terrified, less moved with the caution of a lifelong habitude for concealment, now, he struck another match and examined the gull by its yellow flare.

From the bird's throat ran two thin streams of blood. The blood stained his hands as he picked it up. The gull was warm, living. It struggled, sinuously, faintly, in his hands. All about it, about its head and about its legs, and pinning its powerful wings close to its side, ran great, silken swaths of spider's web. The gull muttered, squeakingly, and writhed weakly between his hands. With a scream he could not suppress he hurled it from him and attempted to rush away from this place of horror.

But now, weakened by his exertions, his forces sapped by long debauchery, his nerves jangling from the terrific stress he had put upon them that night, he could not run.

All about him the underbrush closed in, it seemed to him, as though bent malignantly upon imprisoning him here among these nameless, silent, spinning demons which had destroyed the gull.

He had hurled his matches away with that same flinging motion begotten of his horror. It was utterly impossible to recover them now.

The thick blackness had closed down upon him again at the burning out of the second match. He could feel the blood suffuse his entire body, and then recede, leaving him cold. He shivered, as he suddenly felt the sweat cold against his sodden body. Chill after chill raced down his spine. He whimpered and called suddenly upon God, the forgotten God of his erratic childhood.

But God, it seemed, had no answer for him. A soft touch came delicately upon the back of his clenched right hand. Something soft, clinging and silky, passed around it. Suddenly he shrieked again, and spasmodically tore his hand loose. But even as he struggled to free his hand, a terrible pain seared his leg, a pain as though he had stepped under water upon a sting-ray; a pain as though a red-hot poniard had been thrust far into his calf; and then something soft and clinging fell upon his head and he could feel the thick strands of silk being woven remorselessly through his hair and about his ears. . . .

As he sank to the ground, his consciousness rapidly waning, the first clinging, composite, deliberate strands went across his eyes. His last conscious thought was of his daughter Kathleen's soft, silky hair. . . .

It was not until nearly two weeks later that the skiff came to light, when four large rowboats slowly approached *Les Isles des Quatre Vents* from the direction of the lake side of the base of the Point. Crowded into the boats were the boys from Camp Cherokee making one of their annual boat-hikes to the four islands. Their course naturally brought them first to the island which has been called "The Left Eye."

The St. Lawrence skiff, loosened from its primitive fastenings by a heavy storm which had intervened, had slipped out several feet from its concealing underbrush.

"Oh, look! Somebody's out here already!" shouted a sharp-eyed youngster in the bow of the foremost rowboat.

"Can't we land here, Mr. Tanner?" asked one of the older boys when all eyes had sought out and discovered the skiff. "We have plenty of time. Nobody ever comes to this island, they say, and most of us saw the others last year."

Consulting his watch, his mind on lunch ashore, the counselor in charge of the boat-hike gave his consent, and the four rowboats drew in close to the spot where Godard had made his landing. Mr. Tanner looked closely at the skiff.

"I shouldn't be a bit surprized," he remarked, slowly, "if that were the skiff that was stolen from down on the Point a couple of weeks ago!"

The boys chattered excitedly while the boats lay off the shore of "The Left Eye," Mr. Tanner considering. It was not impossible that the murderer, Godard, lay concealed on this island! No one had hitherto thought of such a possibility.

Mr. Tanner came to a conclusion, after rapid thought. He would take the skiff, thus cutting off the murderer (if indeed he were concealed on the island) from any probable escape. So far it appeared a clear course.

Two reliable, older boys, placed in charge of the salvaged skiff, returned it to its owners, who promptly telephoned the sheriff.

Mr. Tanner conducted his protesting flotilla across to the island which

has been called "The Mouth"—the island on which stood the hut, and where the boys' temporary camp-site had been planned. The oars moved reluctantly, for the boys wanted to land and "hunt the murderer." Mr. Tanner, whose responsibility lay in another direction than the apprehension of criminals, preferred to proceed according to schedule.

Two hours later a laden rowboat put off from the Point and approached The Four Brothers. The watching boys, thus, as it were, augmented by the authorities, could be restrained no longer.

Mr. Tanner was able to manage it so that his four rowboats followed the official rowboat to "The Left Eye." Beyond that he could not control his Indians!

The boys nearly swamped their boats in their eagerness to disembark. . . .

In the end it was one of them who did, actually, discover Godard's remains.

"Gosh!" the rest heard him shout. "Look here, everybody! Here's a thing like a mummy!"

The spot was soon surrounded, the more agile boys distancing the slower-moving sheriff and constables.

Godard's body, easily identifiable from its clothing, lay, or, more precisely, hung, in the thickest tangle of all the tangled bushes and brush which made the central, highest point of the little island almost impenetrable. At first sight, it gave the impression of a bundle of clothes rather than a human body. It was, as the boy had cried out, virtually a mummy, though sodden through the draggled clothes (which Godard's progress through the tearing brush had greatly disarranged) by the effects of the heavy storm which had revealed the skiff.

It gave the appearance of a human body which, as though by some long process of time, had dried up to a mere fraction of its original bulk. It swayed, held free of the ground by the heavy brush, in the brisk breeze which was blowing "up the lake" from the cold north.

The grayish appearance of this strange simulacrum of a human form, which at first puzzled the men when they approached to disengage it from the tangled bushes, was found to be due to innumerable heavy strands of broad opalescent silky webbing, webbing which had been wound about the head, about the hands and arms and legs, webbing now frayed and torn in places by the wind and the friction of the bushes.

One of the constables, a heavy, rather brutal-faced person, pulled at it and rubbed it from his hands on his canvas overalls.

"Looks for all the world like spider web," he remarked laconically. "What d'you s'pose it can be, Herb?" addressing the deputy sheriff in charge.

Herb Maclear, the sheriff, pushed his way through the brush close to the body. He, too, examined the web, touching it gingerly with his finger, and then rubbing his finger as though something uncanny, unwholesome, had touched him. The boys, sensing something dreadful, fell silent. Several pushed their way toward Mr. Tanner, and stood near him.

Maclear, pale now, stooped and seemed to be looking at something near the ground. "Gimme that stick!" he ordered. One of the constables handed him what he demanded, and with it the sheriff poked at something on the ground. Their curiosity overcoming the general sense of something queer about the whole proceeding, several of the boys and two of the constables shouldered through the brush toward the sheriff, now digging with his stick, his face red again from stooping and his exertions.

Those standing nearest observed that the sheriff was enlarging a hole that ran into the ground near the heavy root of one of the bushes, a hole about which were heavy warps of the same gray, shimmering web.

The stick broke through a soft spot, and sank far into the enlarged hole.

"My God!" they heard the sheriff say.

He played delicately with the stick, as though working at something that the ground obscured. He twisted and worked it about in the hole.

At last he drew it up, still carefully, gingerly.

And on its end, transfixed, there came into the light of that morning a huge, frightful, maimed thing, of satiny, loathsome black, like the fur of a bat, with glowing salmon-colored striping showing upon its hunched back—a spider as large as a prize peach, with great, waving, now ineffective, metal-like mandibles. They saw its little burning eyes like harsh diamonds gleam once, before the sheriff, holding it on the ground with his stick, set his foot on the dreadful thing.

The wind blew cold from the north as the men, in a tight knot, half dragged, half carried the meager body of Pierre Godard hastily out through the retarding brush in silence, while a subdued and silent group of boys, closely gathered about their white-faced counselor, hurried down the declivity toward the edge of the cliff, below which they could see their boats, floating down there in the clean water.

Vulture of Vulture's Rock Was

THE MAN WHO WAS DAMNED

By CHARLTON LAWRENCE EDHOLM

". . . For instance, there is a proverb that says, 'Dead men tell no tales,' but it were well to consider whether the proverb be not a concise summing up of human ignorance."

Gude: *Science and Superstition.*

THE last sound my dulling eyes heard was the twang of that thin polished steel, which had burned swiftly into my vitals, to be as swiftly withdrawn.

The Master of Geierstein coolly wiped the rapier with his silken scarf, while I writhed at his feet, and as I gasped out my life he stood negligently plucking the blade as one might finger a guitar; and like the taut string of a guitar it answered *-zing-ng-ng;* and as its vibrations slowly passed into silence, again *zing-ng-ng*——

All this happened in the dark woods on *his* side of the River Neckar, for in following the stag I had incautiously crossed the boundary that divided my estate from that of my family's hereditary foe, the race of Geier von Geierstein; Vulture of Vulture's Rock—and well named.

The encounter took place in a densely shadowed glade, and was, in truth, little less than assassination,

for, as I realized when my rapier met his breast, he wore under his fair, white linen, he wore above his cruel, craven heart, a corselet of tempered links, delicate masterpiece of some Italian armorer, and my blade snapped like glass upon it.

Seeing me disarmed, he thrust me through the body, swiftly but not in passion, and with a gentle laugh stood back to watch me die. At intervals he carelessly twanged the lithe steel, which gave forth a sharp note of exultation, passing away in long musical vibrations, *zing-ng-ng*——

He hated me, with the hatred nursed through many generations, but it was not the hatred of a great-hearted foe, which, defied even in death, *ends* with death. He scorned me: the scorn of his arrogant race, the scorn of a successful rival, the scorn of an ignoble victor. The bitterness of such scorn is far bitterer than death. It taints the soul, even the soul of the dead.

"Vulture of Vulture's Rock, I will avenge myself!" were the last words of mine he heard, and thereat he laughed softly and shrugged his shoulders.

"Perhaps, but I think it highly improbable, my good friend." He was secure; I left no son, and as for my words, he deemed them the impotent ravings of a dying man.

What other words I uttered with my last choking gasps were not meant for him, nor did he hear them for his own soft, ironical laughter and the twanging of his steel.

THREE days elapsed. My body had been found and carried to Schloss Aarberg. The two wounds (one in the breast where the rapier had entered, a smaller one in the back where it had passed out) were washed, and the corpse, shrouded for burial, was laid in the chapel whose windows overlooked the tower of Geierstein on its cliff across the Neckar.

Seven tapers burned about the bier.

Freiherr Geier von Geierstein lay in his chamber overhanging the river and slept, but not soundly, for a fever that was in his blood. By his side lay his wife, bride of a fortnight, and her placid breathing told of dreamless sleep.

The windows were open, the air had turned sultry and a black vapor obscured the heavens. Not a star, not one serene star shone in the dark void, only a solitary baleful light hung between earth and sky and shot its red rays like a burning arrow into the eyes of the sleeping man. He turned to avoid it, he tossed from side to side, he buried his face in the pillows, but with lids open or closed that sullen-glowing light tortured him like a live coal upon his eyeballs. It was from the chapel window in Castle Aarberg, illumined with the seven tapers that stood about my bier.

A faint yet distinct sound as of a guitar plucked lightly—oh, so lightly!—pierced the silence as the poisoned ray pierced the night. Again it sounded and again, still faint as dream music, a short, clear note, then long, long-drawn vibrations—the shadow of a sound.

Gradually the sound grew, drawing nearer, ever nearer, now recurring at longer, now at shorter intervals, now a low murmur, now a sharp, sudden twang, until to the strained ear of him who listened the sound-waves seemed to proceed from a source within the walls of Castle Geierstein, which they overfilled. The sound-waves deluged the room, deafening the wretched and fevered man until he wondered at the peaceful breathing of her who slept at his side.

He listened, scarcely breathing; he tried to convince himself that it was the blood throbbing in his ears; that it was a meaningless noise, not to be feared. He raised his head from his hot pillow; he would assure himself that this was some natural and commonplace sound; merely that. He opened his eyes. The light from Schloss Aarberg's death chamber smote them. He fell back upon his restless pillow. Fear of he knew not what parched his throat and turned his vitals to stone.

At last (as I had foreseen) the doomed man arose in desperation, not with courage, groped in the dark for his weapon, which he unsheathed, and very quietly turned the handle of his chamber door. The sound rang in his ears; it was not loud yet it seemed to echo down the long, stone corridor, clear, metallic, insistent.

Why *must* he trace that sound to its source? A strong pull at the cord by his bedside would bring servants running to do his will. He could not. He fancied that the clangor of the brazen alarm in the tense silence would be more terrifying than to go on.

He cautiously re-closed the door; quaking he picked his way along the hall, guided by the row of windows which admitted a pale light from the courtyard. As he stole along the chill length of the corridor he heard no sound but his own heart-beats, and as he reached the spiral staircase of the *Burgfried*, the highest tower of Geierstein, he sneered at his own folly in pursuing the fantasm of a restless dream.

He would go back; he would sleep off this fever! As he turned, once more the sound pealed forth, down the winding stairs and upon his head as if it would crush him.

A sudden thought flashed light upon his bewilderment and terror; in the topmost window of the tower his bride had fitted an æolian harp; he remembered the resonant box with its taut strings that answered to the lightest wind in the tower. A mouse scratching on the wood or gnawing one of the strings had produced the strange noises. A mouse, a timid, foolish creature, frightened at a footfall, had struck with terror the heart of the Master of Geierstein! He laughed aloud in his relief and the spiral tunnel caught up his laughter and answered, but with an intonation so diabolical that he abruptly ceased.

He was breathless, too, from the quick ascent, and a little giddy from following the stairs around their central shaft. And so he climbed more slowly, counting the windows, or arrow-slits, as he passed them. Of these narrow apertures there were four to each round of the spiral, looking to the four points of the compass, and always as he passed three of these the light came pale and there was silence, but as he passed the fourth which faced Castle Aarberg, the light was red and the sound fell upon his ears, each time louder and more compelling.

Sometimes he responded with an impatient oath, at the last spiral, though, with a laugh of relief; and as he sprang up the remaining few steps to the circular room under the roof, his eyes, searching for the æolian harp—met mine.

My eyes as he had seen them last, my form as he had known it in life, my rapier as it had vainly searched for his heart; but it was unbroken now, and on the long, gleaming needle the red light from the window ran back and forth like blood transmuted to quicksilver. He recoiled a step. I smiled; the smile with which one spurns a coward.

Uttering a fierce outcry like a maddened animal, he flung himself at me, aiming at my heart the same thrust that had served him so well—once.

I did not guard. His rapier snapped in his hand like glass against my breast.

My own weapon but touched his body; his impetus served me better than my force. The polished steel slid through, appearing like a flash of light behind him.

As he dropped I carefully wiped the blade with a silken scarf on which, as I took pains to show him, were dark brown stains.

While he lay writhing, I twanged but once on the weapon. It gave forth the sound, so like the vibrations of a guitar sharply touched, the sound that had drawn him from the side of his sleeping bride.

He was long a-dying. The first fiery serpent tongue of a midsummer storm darted from the cloud-laden west. He was long a-dying. The tempest burst overhead while I stood watching him.

Before the last spark of intelligence was dimmed, I bent over him and whispered in his ear, that he might hear me distinctly through the roar of the elements: "Geier of Geierstein, think not that death sets you free. There is a bitterness more bitter than death. It is mine to requite you."

It was not until two days and two nights had passed that I allowed his tortured soul to return for a brief respite.

They had found his body in the tower chamber that same night. A burn on his breast, a smaller one on his back, and his shattered rapier on the floor, told a clear story to the physician. The storm that had shaken the mighty castle of Geierstein had felled its lord with a thunderbolt. So it was interpreted by all.

He lay in his bridal chamber two days and two nights, and all the time she whom I loved was bending over the body that she incessantly strove to recall to life. Then I realized the wealth of love that I had lost and that he had won, and I hated him the more. It was unfairly won, for he was incapable of love. He had wooed, as he had lived, as he had fought, traitorously. Vulture of Vulture's Rock!

He breathed at last, he stirred, he opened his eyes, and the horror of their gaze was unutterable. He raved, he blasphemed, he sought in vain for words to tell them of the terrors his soul had undergone in those two days when I lashed and rode it through the Universe of Death.

They could not understand nor believe. When in his terror he entreated piteously for help from the implacable foe who sat so sternly waiting at his bedside, they called it delirium; when, finally, I again snatched his wretched soul to myself they called it death.

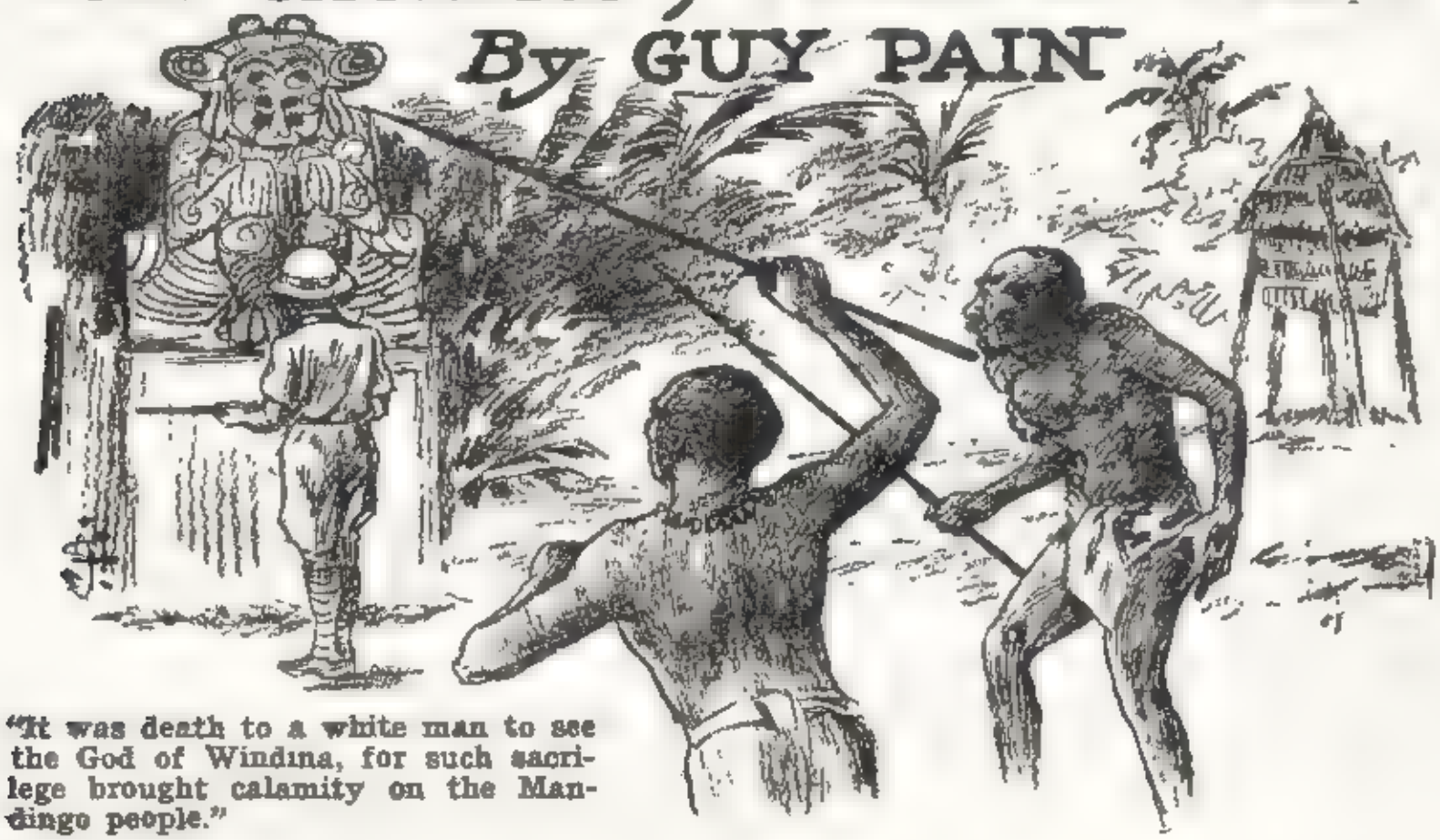
Only once more did his spirit return to his body; in the tomb. But a few years ago workmen unsealing his vault (with its boastful epitaph) found the leaden casket burst and open *almost* wide enough for the quick-interred to escape. By the posture of the skeleton one could see that his struggles must have been superhuman.

The memorial tablet that covers my own poor bones tells in sonorous Latin that I was a good churchman, a very soldier of the faith. No tombstone flattery, that. It is true. In life my soul was my very dearest treasure (next to my sacred honor) and I ardently prayed for its salvation. Still I think you will agree with me that I was given a good price when with my last gasp I bartered my soul, my only remaining possession, to the Evil One for—well, let us say for satisfaction.

It was one summer evening, a hundred and fifty-odd years ago, in the woods by Geierstein.

THE CHOKING of ALLISON GREY

By GUY PAIN



"It was death to a white man to see the God of Windina, for such sacrilege brought calamity on the Mandingo people."

THE smoking room of the Travelers Club was emptying rapidly. Many of the members were leaving for the theaters, and others preferred the billiard room, or the library. The obsequious waiters were still hurrying about carrying coffees, black and white, liqueurs and cigars, and over the whole premises brooded an air of quiet serenity.

There were four members of the Travelers Club in the smoking room, and each had drawn up a huge armchair so that they formed a semicircle before the cheery fire.

These four men were travelers all, and would have been introduced as Sir Henry Faber, K. C. M. G. K. B. E. F. R. G. S., to the right of the fire. Next him sat Sir Welldon Mainwaring, K. C. B., K. C. S. I. K. N. S., F. R. H. S. G. S., while Joseph Wilson, B. C. H. F. R. C. P., F. R. S. E., was the third man.

In the fourth chair sat the Hon. Stanley Bellchambers.

"By Jove," drawled Sir Henry Faber, "d'you know it is just five years this week since we have all met at the same time in the club? Then, however, we had a fifth. Where is he? Still shooting at lions and hitting monkeys? Old Grey always was a bad shot. I shall not forget the time when he shot a keeper in the leg. It cost £50."

"Yes, where is Allison Grey, Bellchambers?" asked Wilson. "He was a good sort, but he always was a muddler."

Bellchambers, the man appealed to, did not join in the laughter which escaped from the lips of the other three.

"Poor old Allison Grey has gone West," he said quietly.

Immediately the faces of the others assumed a solemn look.

"You mean to say!" said Mainwaring. "I'm sorry. How did it happen?"

"It is the first I have heard about this," said Faber. "The last I heard about him was that he was sailing for Liberia. Did he die out there? Or was he——" He made an eloquent gesture which spoke for itself.

"Allison Grey is not alive, and that is all I can tell you. He didn't die naturally, and he certainly was not killed."

"That, if I may say so," joined in Mainwaring, "sounds like a paradox. But how do you know?"

"Because," answered Bellchambers, "I was with him when his spirit left this earth. I will tell you the story." He paused, and then he sat up suddenly, and leaning over to Sir Welldon Mainwaring he said sharply, "Mainwaring, do you believe in mesmerism?"

Before he answered, Mainwaring thought for a few seconds. "If you ask me whether I really believe that one person can mesmerize another, with my experience of the Indian natives I say emphatically 'yes.' In my belief the so-called wonderful Indian rope trick is nothing but a hypnotic suggestion to the audience, who imagine something that never happens."

"Your two words, 'hypnotic suggestion,' Mainwaring, are the two words I have been hunting for. Listen and I will tell you of the passing of Allison Grey."

The men leant back comfortably in their chairs, and as a waiter came in answer to their ring, Wilson ordered a fresh supply of liqueurs. They soon arrived, and then the three of these men listened to a tale that enthralled even hardened travelers such as they. As the tale unfolded, their cigars died out, and the liqueurs remained untouched.

"It was about eighteen months ago," started Bellchambers, "that I determined to make a trip into the interior of Liberia. As a matter of fact, my reason for making this trip was that during my previous travels in Liberia I had heard that in a certain village not far from the Niger, in the Mandingo country, the natives had a new fetish which was causing an extraordinary amount of interest, not only to the village itself and its neighbors, but for many, many miles around. As the majority of villages have their own particular fetishes, and their own witch doctors, it occurred to me that it must indeed be something out of the ordinary to excite such a commotion. It was said that there were pilgrimages being made every week from villages as far distant as fifty miles to see the wonderful fetish.

"In due course I had all preparations completed, and having hired twenty Vai men as porters I made a start. Of course it took me quite a time to get near my destination, but I noticed that the nearer I got to Windina, the name of the village at which the fetish resided, the quieter and the more secretive were the natives. Neither could my Vai boys get any information as to what the fetish was.

"One day I happened to strike the Epwesi village of Kinko, and having duly presented the chief with a present I was shown to the guest house, and here I lay down and went to sleep.

"In the middle of the night I was awakened by one of my Vai boys, who reported that one of the villagers wanted urgently to speak to me. I saw the villager, and learnt that Nogoni, the chief, was dying and had sent for me to save him.

"I went to see Nogoni, and found his face screwed up in pain.

"'Oh, Master,' he groaned when he saw me, 'I am dying of sickness.

Chief, save me, and I will do all you ask me.'

"I soon diagnosed his trouble and found that all he wanted was a dose of castor oil, which I always carry about with me for cases of this sort, which are frequent. This I administered, and told him he would not die before dawn, and that I would see him just one hour after the *siyi* (cock) had crowed.

"I kept my promise, and of course his pain had gone.

" 'Chief,' he said, 'you have saved me with your nasty abominations. I will keep my word. Command me, and you shall have all my seven daughters as your wives.'

"I hastily explained that I did not wish his seven daughters as my wives, as I did not feel inclined to marry, but he could oblige me by giving me some information concerning the new fetish of Windina.

"His face fell when I asked him this, but he kept his word.

" 'Oh, Master!' he began; 'five moons ago, I and N'Gesgi, the witch doctor, and some of the elders of the village made a pilgrimage to Windina to offer up prayer to the new God, and take presents. Oh, Chief! I may not tell you of what I saw, for it is death to any white man to see the God, for it is said that when a white man sees the God of Windina, then shall terrible calamity descend on the Mandingo people.'

" 'Can you not tell me, Nogoni, what the God is like, whether it is small or large.'

" 'Oh, Master! I should die if I told you, for M'Bena, the witch doctor of Windina, would order me to die.'

"At this I pondered to myself, for I could see that I could extract no more information from Nogoni. I must unconsciously have been thinking aloud, for while I was wondering whether they would dare kill a white man for seeing the fetish, Nogoni broke in on my thought.

" 'Master, they would indeed kill any white man who saw the God, for already one white man is waiting death, which will come when the new moon begins. He but touched the house in which dwells the new God.'

" 'What say you, Nogoni? Have they dared set hands on a *nu-kule* (white man)?'

"My face must have betrayed my anger, for Nogoni looked frightened.

" 'Master, that is what I have heard.'

"Under these circumstances it devolved upon me to rescue the white man, whoever he might be.

"For some days I traveled through the bush, and then crossing through an extremely thick belt of forest I approached Windina. I sent one of my Vai boys forward with some handsome presents for the chief, and also a present for the fetish. He soon returned with the insolent message that I must not enter the village but that Bebioni would condescend to come to meet me. Presently arrived some Windina boys with reciprocal presents, and a message to the effect that Bebioni was on his way. He arrived a few minutes later with a retinue of warriors and wives, and the elders of the villages. On seeing my party they halted. I stepped forward and Bebioni did the same.

" 'Chief,' I said, 'wherefore am I bidden not to enter your village when I come on a peaceful errand, and have sent you presents?'

" 'Master,' he replied, 'you know of the new God of Windina, and you would set eyes on the God, but the good God has communicated to M'Bena that no white man may defile its presence.'

" 'And wherefore to good M'Bena, the witch doctor, comes this madness

that he bids the white man begone? Oh, Bebioni, you know the power of the white man, and if you kill one, then will come many hundreds of others with sticks of fire which go pop-pop-pop, and will kill many score with a streak of lightning. Then your Good God would blame Bebioni for their deaths.'

"He was visibly impressed by my rating of the powers of the European, and least of all did he like the mention of the blame being put on his shoulders by the Good God. Seeing this I pursued my advantage still farther.

" 'Bebioni, the stick of fire which goes pop-pop-pop has whispered into my ears that there lies in your village a white man.'

"His eyes fell before mine, and he shifted uneasily from one foot to another.

" 'Master, I know not of what you speak.'

" 'Bebioni, that stick of fire which goes pop-pop-pop has whispered into my ears that when the new moon begins, that white man will be sacrificed to the Good God because the white man began to lay his hands on the building of the Good God. Furthermore, if that white man die, then will come many white men and the gun will go pop-pop-pop, and many lives will be lost.'

" 'Master,' he replied in a weak voice, 'the gun which goes pop-pop-pop has told you wrongly.'

" 'Bebioni, already I hear the popping of the gun and see many natives dying, I see many white men seizing Bebioni, and they throw a rope over the tree, and Bebioni is hanging by the neck.'

" 'Master, he shall be released.'

" 'Bebioni will invite me into the village.'

" 'Master, Bebioni wishes you to stay in Windina.'

In due course and with proper solemnity I marched into the village with my twenty Vai boys. We were greeted with scowls, but were not molested, and I was shown to the Guest House. Soon a messenger arrived asking me to meet Bebioni.

"I followed the messenger and we arrived at a meeting of the villagers. Seated in a big chair was Bebioni, who was surrounded by his wives, and elders of the village. At his right hand was the chief witch doctor, who, I judged, and rightly, as I afterward found, to be M'Bena. Squatting in a semicircle round the chair were the natives of the village.

" 'Oh, Master,' cried Bebioni when he saw me approaching, 'I have invited you hither in order that you might tell the gun that goes pop-pop-pop that the white man is to be released. Fetch the white man!'

"I was watching M'Bena's face as Bebioni said this, and if ever I saw a face containing a look of cruel vindictiveness and cunning it was then. I trembled for the white man. There was a stir as some of the natives returned with the captive. I did not recognize the dirty face and the unkempt appearance till the prisoner gave a cheery laugh, and then I knew I was face to face with Allison Grey."

The speaker paused and there was a quietness in the smoking room. Not a sound was heard, until Mainwaring found his cigar was out, and struck a match to relight it. Wilson, suddenly discovering a waiter at his side, saying, "Did you ring, sir?" knew then that it was the fourth time the question had been asked, but the other three times it had not reached his consciousness.

"No," he said irritably and waved him away, but a voice came from behind the four: "Yes, John, a Curaçoa." The four looked up, and to their surprize found several of the members had come in during the

story and had drawn up to listen. "Go on, Bellchambers, don't mind us, we won't interrupt," said one of the newcomers, and he went on: "But you were all so absorbed that you did not notice me, and I was so interested I took the liberty of listening."

"That's all right," said Bellchambers with a far-away look in his eyes.

Presently he continued.

"You can imagine what a surprize I had when I found that the white man I had rescued was our old friend Allison Grey.

" 'Hullo, old chap!' he yelled over to me in English, 'you didn't expect to find me here, did you? Say, though, who won the Derby?'

"You all know the kind of ass Grey was, but he was no coward. I think he would have made a joke with his executioner had he ever been hung.

"Bebioni now spoke. 'White man,' he said to Grey, 'you, who put hands on the sacred building of the Good God, you should have died. Ay, and you would have died on the first night of the New Moon as *Ndyara* (the lion) uttered his first hunting call, if Chief Bellchambers had not told me of the gun which goes pop-pop-pop. Had you set eyes on the Good God nothing would have saved you, for the Good God would have protected us from the pop-pop-pop gun.'

"All would have been well now, for Grey was free, and Bebioni in a good temper. We could have left at once, and Grey would have lived to have told this tale, but like the cheerful idiot he always was, as usual he put his foot in it.

" 'Pah!' he cried, and snapped his fingers, 'I don't care that much for your blessed old God! It can't harm me!'

"Pandemonium broke loose, for the natives rose up with a shrill yell and in another moment they would have rushed us both, and neither of us would have lived another second, but Bebioni and M'Bena halted them just in time.

" 'Peace!' called out Bebioni in a huge voice. 'I have granted the white man his liberty.'

"The natives sullenly squatted once more, but many were the scowls that Grey received.

"Then M'Bena spoke. 'Listen, white man,' he said in quiet tones, 'listen, you who put hands on the house of the Good God, and look at me.'

"Grey looked him in the eyes, his lips and nose sneering. M'Bena's glance caught and fixed his eyes to his own, and Grey stood there bound by a stronger will than his to look into M'Bena's eyes, while M'Bena in slow monotonous tones recited the following: 'Listen, oh doomed white man, listen to the edict of M'Bena, the witch doctor, the devil doctor, the right hand of Bebioni, the chosen of the Windina, and servant of the Good God, listen to me, I say: by the grace of Bebioni, chief of the Windina in the Mandingo country, you, who have mocked the Good God, shall suffer. No native hands shall touch you, for we fear the pop-pop-pop gun, but you shall die. Yes, you shall choke to death. On the first night shall you fear much and sleep not, on the second night less fear shall you feel, and on the third be quite easy, and mock the Good God once more. But on the fourth night you shall dream of being choked, and wake to find it but a dream. Then shall you rejoice. On the fifth night once more you shall dream and once more wake still to feel the fingers choking. On the sixth night no sleep shall you get for the fear which will consume you, and on the seventh night, when the new moon rises for the first time, then shall the unseen fingers of the Good God strangle you till breath ceases, and you will know the power of the Good God. Chief Bellchambers shall live, for he respects the Good God,

and the Good God is pleased with the presents which the chief sent. Thus says M'Bena, the witch doctor, the devil doctor, the right hand of Bebioni, the chosen of the Windina, the servant of the Good God.'

"The chant came to an end and Grey shivered, and I could see the sweat pouring from his forehead. Slowly he turned away, and in his eyes I saw a great fear.

"We left Windina soon afterward, and made for the coast again. Poor Grey never said a word for hours. The Vai boys also were quiet and every now and again would give a pitying glance at Grey.

"NIGHT came at last and we camped. Grey's nerve had gone and he could scarcely eat, and he would keep on casting frightened glances over his shoulder as if fearing an attack. The fire could not be made hot enough for him. Huddled in his blankets he sat there moaning. I tried to buck him up, but when I spoke he only looked at me blankly as if he did not understand what I was saying. It was some time before I fell asleep, and he was still awake then.

"The next morning he was better, more like his old self, and when breakfast was over he was laughing and joking with his old abandon. He tried to shoot a bubal hartebeeste which we saw, and with his old clumsiness hit something which squeaked quite ten yards away from the object. He kept lively during the day, but as evening approached he became quieter.

"Once more we camped, and he exhibited the same symptoms as on the previous evening, but to a lesser degree, and I had the satisfaction of seeing him fall asleep before I, too, joined him in the paradise of rest.

"I need say nothing about the next day, or even the next night, for he was just as you all knew him, a jolly carefree devil, as brave as you make them, and as careless as a *yasiri* (hippopotamus). By this time he was ridiculing all that had happened in Windina, and treating it all as a huge joke, just as M'Bena had said he would. I must admit, however, that I, too, really did not feel any real alarm, because I did not see how a man could be strangled without the aid of a human agency, and it was only natural that the queer effect which the witch doctor's recitation had had on us should wear off with the passing of time. Therefore on the third night Allison Grey mocked the Good God and defied it to do its worst.

"On the fourth day we reached Nogoni's village again. His surprize at seeing Allison Grey still alive was only exceeded by his admiration for me for having effected the release of the white man.

"As it was after 3 o'clock and we had been traveling continuously for seven days, I decided to stop the night in the village, so we lay down on blankets in the guest house, which I will admit was kept decidedly cleaner than the majority of such places. The rest of the day we strolled round the village and talked to the villagers.

"When I went to bed I had a comfortable feeling that the episode of the Windina village was completely over.

"It seemed as though I had scarcely closed my eyes when I felt a rough shaking at my shoulder, and sprang up to find it was Grey waking me.

"Not in the best of humor at this summary awakening, I asked him what the devil he wanted, in a somewhat angry voice, but when I looked at his eyes, what I saw there made me soften, for there was the fear of death in them.

"'My God, Bellchambers!' he shouted, and there was an awful ring

in his voice. 'Who's been in this place?'

"I struck a match, and by its flickering light found that with the exception of our two selves the room was empty. 'No one,' I replied, and thus questioned him in turn: 'What ails you, man?'

"Having satisfied himself that the hut really was empty and that no one, apparently, had entered, he calmed down and went on to tell me that soon after he had fallen asleep he dreamt that M'Bena had entered the hut, and putting his knees on his (Grey's) chest had clutched him by the throat and commenced throttling him.

"I persuaded him that it was nothing but a dream and at length he fell asleep again.

"The next day we bid Nogoni adieu, and I really believe he was sorry we were going, for he had taken a liking to me. He was not a bad sort, either, and his sense of humor was undoubtedly strong, even for the natives, who are as a whole decidedly humorous, although perhaps some of their more subtle humor would not appeal to the European taste. Nogoni advised me to sleep at a village at which his sister's husband was chief, and as it was comparatively on my way, I decided to do so, and one of Nogoni's men came with us.

"During the march Grey several times referred to his dream of the previous night, and in some uncanny way it depressed him, for his spirits were very low; although why a bad dream should depress a person for the following twenty-four hours is beyond my comprehension.

"Having found Nogoni's sister's husband, we slept at his village.

"Grey seemed a bit afraid to go to sleep, but after some persuasion I made him realize that no one could get in without my hearing, and to appease him I set one of my Vai boys on guard outside the door.

"Several hours afterward I was awakened by terrible screams. Jumping up hurriedly, I lit a torch and rushed over to Grey.

"'Drag him off, Stanley!' he yelled; 'the beggar's choking me! I can't breathe!'

"His voice sank to a husky whisper while his hands clawed at his throat. I rubbed my eyes, but there was no one to be seen. I shook Grey by the shoulders and his antics ceased, and sanity returned into his eyes. He grasped hold of my hand as a drowning man would grasp a straw, and sobbed.

"'Stanley,' he moaned, 'why didn't you kill him?'

"'Who?' I asked.

"'M'Bena. He was on my chest choking me.'

"I examined him for signs of malaria but could find no trace of fever. 'My dear old Allison,' I said to him gently, 'no one has been in this house since we both came together,' and I called the Vai boy, who corroborated my statement.

"I decided that we had been marching too much, and the heat was affecting Grey's brain, so I made up my mind to stop for three days at the village we were in—I forget its name at the moment. Grey seemed rather glad.

"The following morning he was even more depressed than the day before, and he just sat and shivered the whole day long. When night came he begged of me not to go to sleep, and to oblige him I said I wouldn't, but my flesh or brain was stronger than my will-power, and I fell asleep. Nothing awakened me, however, but when I awoke in the morning I found Grey had not slept a wink, the whole night through, and his eyes had sunk in and his cheeks were hollow.

"He clung to me like a little child, and when the Vai boy brought some

breakfast in, he scarcely had strength to lift the spoon to his mouth, and half of the food slopped over the side and messed down his trousers.

"In vain I tried to cheer him up and tell him we would soon reach the coast, and then England. Nothing could move him, and he just clung to me and moaned and sobbed.

" 'Don't let him come tonight, Stanley! Shoot him if he comes near. For God's sake protect me!' And that is how he kept on the whole day long. I offered him a native-made cigarette, made by one of my Vai boys out of native tobacco, but he turned it round and round in his fingers and looked at it as if he had never before seen a cigarette. When I placed it in his mouth and lit it he puffed at it two or three times and then threw it away.

"The long day dragged painfully on and on. The midday meal was brought in, and this time Grey would not touch it. As the afternoon drew on his mind partly broke, and he took me for M'Bena, and seized my throat. I struggled in vain; with the strength of a madman he treated me like a baby, and had it not been for some of my boys entering at the sound of the struggle my life would have been ended there and then. This I treated as a lesson, and so I arranged for six of my boys to stay up and look after him during the night.

"As darkness fell he recovered his sanity, and also his fears, and he cowered in a corner, covering his face with his arms.

"The night dragged on slowly. All the surrounding jungle was awake, and I could hear the animals uttering their different hunting cries. Instinctively I waited for the roars of the lion. Once I heard him giving a long wailing cry as he called for his cubs and mates to follow him, and I looked sharply over to Grey, but nothing happened

"Then suddenly, arising above all other sounds of the jungle, I heard the roars of His Majesty as he hunted, and it sounded like the deep reverberating rolls of distant thunder.

" 'My God! my throat! He is at my throat!' Grey yelled out, and a faint beam of the New Moon shone through a crack in the door. He threw himself on the floor, rolled about in wild paroxysms, and clawed at his own throat.

" 'Get hold of his arms!' I shouted to the terrified boys. They did so, and it required all our combined strength to hold him down. There was a gurgle in his throat, and his eyes rolled fearfully. Then as the loud roar of the lion died away I heard the death rattle in Allison's throat.

"I struck a match, and on the skin were two purple blotches just as if Grey were strangled to death."

"A JOLLY fine yarn, but a pure coincidence," said one of the members who had been listening.

"Perhaps," answered Bellchambers slowly.

"The girl screamed—a little voice, shrill with terror, an agony of sudden fear."

The Story So Far

THROUGH an instrument called the myrdoscope, Brett Gryce sees a girl in a distant world, menaced by a giant. Her world is so vast that a second of Time there takes whole years of earthly measure. During three years he catches glimpses of the girl and her peril, the giant about to bring down a huge tree on her head, and the girl awakening to a sense of terror, but all this has taken but a second of Time on that vaster world. Brett and Martt Gryce set out to rescue the girl, in a space-ship invented by their father, Dr. Gryce, which can change its position in Time and Space. They increase their size to fifty million times what it was on earth, and penetrate beyond our universe faster than the speed of light, until they are lost in the black immensity of Space.

CHAPTER 7

"A SINGLE STARLIT NIGHT—AN ETERNITY"

BRETT had momentarily paused in his narrative, but when we would have plied him with questions he waved us aside.

"Let us finish first. The panic that was upon us with this knowledge—belief—that we were lost out there in Time and Size and Space did not last long, for we fought against it. And presently we were calmer—able to reason. Our size-dials were at rest—we had shut off the switch. By earth standards the vehicle was 500,000 miles in height. Our relative Time was a century of yours, to a little more than a minute of ours. Some 8,000 years into your earth-future had already piled up on the earth standard Time-dial—and we were adding one hundred years to it almost every minute. Our velocity had reached a maximum of 3480 light-years per hour—and we were 12,000 light-years from earth. The velocity was now lessening a trifle; it dropped nearly to an even 3,000. With unchanging size now, with nothing near us to repel or attract, the ether friction overcame inertia to reach a balance of forces.

"We conquered our fear—began to reason what we should do. It was of course futile to look for your aural

ray. It had been extinguished thousands of years. We wanted to go on to our destination, and it was the non-operation of the myrdoscope which worried and puzzled us. . . . . I was sure, Father, that up to this point in the voyage I had made no serious error of direction. The image of the girl should have been before us. But the myrdoscope would not work."

"The Time——" I suggested.

"Ah, no, Frank! We had progressed very little into the Time of that girl's life. She should still have been reclining there on the bank; or at least the bank itself should have been there. We puzzled over what could be the trouble with the myrdoscope. We found the trouble——"

"I found it," said Martt eagerly.

Brett nodded. "Yes, it was Martt who reasoned it out. A curious explanation—and one, I think, which involves the greatest of all the issues we had encountered. The myrdoscope would not operate for a very big, but very simple reason. You would think to find the answer in Science? Not so. It was a theosophical reason, Father."

Brett was very earnest, and very solemn. "It was my purpose, you understand, to reach the girl at the *exact moment* we had always seen her. We planned to make our Time before reaching her, coincident with hers of that given instant. Remember that. Consider then: At this other instant when now we were trying to see her through the myrdoscope, our Time-rate had carried us about 8,000 years into earth's future. But also, it had carried us some forty minutes into the girl's future.

"Not science now. Metaphysics, perhaps—and certainly Theology, and Theosophy. We were destined *to be with the girl during those forty minutes.* And we could not now look ahead and *see ourselves*—see our future actions.

"Father, you've spoken of that. What you said was true. It is not God's way that man should look at his own little future. Not best for us. The Almighty knows it, and has prohibited it. Chaos would result, for we live upon hope. There was no scientific reason why the myrdoscope should not show us what we were destined to do during those forty minutes. Yet—it was dead. Dark. Inoperative.

"And this now I know: With all the science in the world there are some things you can not do—those things which transgress the Creator's laws. Before them—against all scientific reason, logic—we must fail. You can not see your future; you can only live it once. Nor can you go back through Time to stop in your own Past; to live again your life—to do differently than you did before. It is unthinkable — impossible, even though now we have the scientific means to accomplish it. It is not the Almighty's plan—and He will not let us do it.

"We reasoned all this out. It was simple enough. We had our Time-switch which would change our Time-rate irrespective of the normal Time-change inherent to our size. . . . That was what puzzled you awhile ago, Frank? Well, now we used that Time-change mechanism.

"It brought us new sensations. A shock, a queer humming lightness pervading the vehicle, the air, our own bodies. A lightness as though almost we were mere shadows of our former selves. Specters, a ghostly vehicle, humming with an infinite vibration.

"Presently that all wore away; or at least we grew used to it—so that had there been anything in Space to see, as very soon there was, ourselves were the substance—all else the shadows.

"We went backward very slightly in Time. I suppose some forty minutes of the girl's Time. I tested it by the myrdoscope. The instrument flashed on! It was operating! A continuous *retrograde* action of the Time-mechanism was necessary to hold us upon that single given instant of the girl's existence. The calculation was intricate; I reached it, partly by mathematics, partly by experimentation with the myrdoscope. I saw fragments of the girl's immediate Past, as our Time-change swung us into it. Saw her arrive alone in the woodland dell. Saw her lie down, at ease, with a security unsuspecting; saw the grinning, vicious little gnomes creep upon her; the leering giant appear. And made, then, another startling discovery—I'll tell you about it in a moment.

"At last I had the Time-change correctly gaged; we were—in relation to the girl—standing still in Time. Presently we again increased our size. An alteration of the Time-mechanism was needed; a progressive alteration. But this was simple to calculate and to adjust."

Frannie asked, "What was your discovery?"

He smiled. "Curious as always, little sister? It was that the giant was in the act of becoming *smaller!* The gnomes were growing in size!" He checked our chorus of exclamations.

"I will tell you now: This giant—these gnomes—were three beings who did not belong to the girl's world. They had come there from a greater world outside the atom. By means of science—such means possibly as we now were using with the vehicle—they had diminished their stature to the infinitely small. Had gone down and down into their tiny atom, to come upon the girl and her realm."

II

Again Brett waved us aside. "Not now, please! Oh, yes—I can tell you the structure of this, our little fragment of the material universe! But let me finish first about our voyage.

"With our Time-change corrected, the myrdoscope readily had picked up the image of the girl. A larger image, for we were 12,000 light-years closer to her. The same scene, stricken again of motion. The giant standing there; the gnome climbing upon the girl's ankle; and herself, just aware of her danger, with dawning terror on her face.

"The electro-telescope also was working now. Looking behind us, we could just see the last of the stars. And soon they were gone. A day of our conscious existence went by. At 3,000 light-years an hour we added 72,000 light-years of distance—a total from earth of about 84,000. The black abyss of Space had not remained empty. Off to one side had been a faint glow. A nebula; a patch of star-dust. Through the telescope we could see stars—a complete starry universe. It was as large, no doubt, as that we had passed through.

"It gave us a new idea of the immensity of Space. Separated by some 30,000 light-years from our own universe of stars—of which the Solar System is so tiny a part—this other star-patch was equally as large. And yet it seemed to lie isolated in fathomless Space. It drifted by us and in a few hours was gone. And far off to the other side of us, another patch came past. And others; each several thousand light-years in extent; each isolated from all its fellows.

"We traveled another full day. Over 150,000 light-years from earth. Yet the girl's image was seemingly not coming nearer very rapidly. We felt the voyage would take too long, so again we increased our size."

I interrupted. "Had you calculated the girl's relative size?"

"Yes," he said. "In a moment, Frank, you shall have it. We—our vehicle—was 500,000 miles high, compared to earth. We increased it to 600,000. Our velocity also increased. At a million miles of height—I have made all my stated figures round numbers, but they are approximately correct—at this million-mile height, we reached normality to the girl. It simplified our mechanism adjustments. There was no longer a size-change necessary. A retrograde Time-change, equal to our own now normal rate of existence, held us at that same instant of her life.

"Our velocity was more than proportionately increased. To demonstrate that mathematically would be intricate—would involve several very complicated formulas, which would not interest you now. . . We passed, distantly, a score or more of starry universes—to the sides, and above and below us—lying in every plane; and of every size and general extent. Some were small, a few thousand light-years like our own. Others immense; one which seemed 500,000 light-years at least in diameter.

"We reached ultimately a maximum velocity of about 90,000 light-years an hour. We had previously gone 150,000 light-years from earth. We traveled some eighty additional hours, not all at the maximum—for possibly half that time we were steadily accelerating. And at a total of 4,750,000 light-years from the earth, a faint glow of seeming phosphorescence showed in the blackness beneath us.

"There was a universe to one side, ahead of us. But this was a different light. A radiation from the Inner Surface itself. The Inner Surface of the hollow little atom within which all this Space and its infinitesimal whirling electrons is contained. They are immense suns, to us here on earth, but from the larger viewpoint they were mere electrons, whirling, flashing around in tiny orbits a thousand times a second.

"The girl and her realm, as we had thought, are on this Inner Surface of what we may choose to call an atom. Themselves—this girl and her people—are infinitesimal. This atom of ours is merely some tiny particle of matter in that other world from which the giant and the gnomes had descended. A tiny particle of matter. Call it a grain of sand, lying with trillions of its fellows upon some great ocean beach—lying there in the light of stars shining in infinite Space above it. Lying there for a single starlit night which is all eternity for us. A single starlit night—an eternity! Infinity, of Space and Time? Why, even now I have seen no more than an infinitesimal fragment of them! . . . .

"The giant and gnomes were doubtless normally of the same size—only momentarily did they happen to be different. . . . Wait, Frannie, please! I can't tell it to you any faster. . . . The Inner Surface became visible to our telescopes at about 4,900,000 light-years. A realm of land and water. Vegetation. Strange of aspect, yet normal too. It stretched beneath us in every direction—a huge concave surface.

"We kept our size, but using the repellent force of this Inner Surface, I gradually cut down our velocity. Down more and more until that last light-year or so took us a week to traverse. The girl, Father, is approximately 5,000,000 light-years from here. We—our earth—may be near the center of the void. I don't know. Perhaps we are much nearer the girl's side. It isn't important . . .

"The Inner Surface at last lay close beneath us. It took us an addi-

tional week of diminishing velocity to reach its atmosphere. I was cautious; I had the velocity under control always."

He paused a moment, seeming carefully to consider his next words. "I want you now to forget earth standards. Take the larger viewpoint exclusively. Let me speak of miles, not in relation to earth, but miles—in relation to the Inner Surface—which are 100 million times longer. Let me speak then of myself as again but six feet high; the vehicle, 52.8 feet high. Realize that by the larger standards I was but one-twentieth of a light-year from earth."

Dr. Gryce said gravely, "Your telescope would show a globe like the earth very plainly at one-twentieth of a light-year of distance. You must explain, Brett, why you could not see it—or any of the great stars of our immediate universe."

Brett nodded. "We could not see the earth, because to our size it was merely a little orange. To be more exact, a ball about five inches in diameter. A tiny ball I could have held in my hand, whirling out there in Space, spinning like a top on its axis to make your infinitesimal days and nights; traversing its entire orbit—a complete revolution around its little sun—more than three times every second!

"With these other standards, then, I want you to visualize us as we sat on the floor of the vehicle gazing down through the lower window. We were, say a hundred miles above the Inner Surface, just entering the upper strata of its atmosphere, and falling gently downward. Beneath us lay a broad vista of land and water; vegetation; forests; here and there patches of human habitation—houses, villages. It was a strange, unfamiliar landscape, yet not unduly abnormal. In every direction—as we dropped closer—it spread upward to our horizon. A rolling country; gently undulating hills, broad valleys—and off near the horizon a jagged mountain range. It seemed not far away; we could see black yawning holes in it; the mouths of caves, or tunnels, perhaps.

"The broad crescent lake lay directly beneath us. Trees bordered its banks; trees strange of shape—yet one would call them trees at once. A collection of low, flat-roofed buildings lay beside the water. A village—or a city. The buildings were queerly curved — seemingly crescent-shaped. They had no straight lines. They seemed generally of but one story, though a few were larger; and upon an eminence near the water stood one much larger; more ornate of shape than all the others.

"It was not a fantastic scene, but wholly rational to our own accepted standards. A sylvan atmosphere seemed to hang upon it. Trees and flowers were everywhere; the rooftops seemed gardens as luxuriant as those beside the houses. The streets were broad and orderly; and beyond the city ribbons of roads wound out over the hills.

"A sylvan landscape, with an air of quiet peace upon it. I felt a sense of surprize. This was not modernity; nor a civilization more advanced than our own—nor yet was it barbarism. Later I knew it was decadence. A people who once had been far up the slope of civilization, over the peak, and now were coming down upon the other side. The peaceful, restful ease of decadence, which to complete the inevitable cycle of all human life ultimately would again bring them to barbarism.

"We saw these details as we fell gently toward the crescent lake. You will notice I have not mentioned color in the scheme, nor movement. Our Time-mechanism was operating. The

scene beneath us was stricken motionless, since always we were holding to the same instant of its Time. An unreality lay upon it; a flat, shadowy grayness of aspect. An unnatural stillness. We dropped closer. A shadowy boat seemed on the lake—a boat with a sail. It lay there, immobile. The water was rippled by a breeze; but they were frozen ripples. And in the streets now we saw people and curious vehicles—all standing like waxen figures.

"The grove of trees—the woodland dell wherein the girl was lying—was a short distance down the lake shore from the city. A single house was near it; but in the other direction was unbroken forest. An open space was there—a few hundred feet from the girl and her assailants. We decided to land there. We knew we were invisible as yet—a ghost of a vehicle, all in this same instant coming from Space to land upon the lake shore.

"We had not yet decided just what we would do. But it was necessary to land first. And necessary also for the vehicle to assume the Time-rate of this realm before we could leave it. When that was done we would be normal humans, to rescue the girl as best we might.

"We dropped into the little clearing at the edge of the lake, and gently came to rest—and upon the surface of the ground, since to us it would have had no substance; but within a foot of it, where, like a ghost hovering, I held us level. The unreality of us, I must repeat, was not to us apparent; we seemed solid—it was the ground, the forest about us which was unreal. Spectral trees; a gray twilight. I made sure that nothing was touching us. We were a few inches only above a soft-looking gray ground. We were ready to cut off our Time-change—to take our places normal to this new realm."

CHAPTER 8

THE ENCOUNTER IN THE FOREST GLADE

MARTT said, "I would have thrown off the Time-switch and rushed out at once. But Brett wanted to talk about it."

Brett smiled. "It was difficult for us to remember that no haste was needed. No haste—until we took the girl's Time-rate. And then we would need all haste possible. We discussed what we were to do. We had weapons—the electronic flash, for instance, with which we could have struck down that giant as with a lightning bolt. But could we? I was not sure—not absolutely sure—that the weapon would be operative. Or that, perchance, this giant would not by some strange means be proof against it. A man sixty feet tall is no mean adversary. Suppose he held the girl before him? Would I dare attack?"

"I suggested," Martt put in, "that we take the normal Time-rate of the girl, and be in hiding until the giant's size had dwindled to hers. The dwarfs were growing. But there would only be three of them, against two of us—and so far as we had seen, they were not armed."

Brett went on: "That didn't seem a good plan. The giant's size was, we had calculated, rapidly dwindling. Within five minutes he would be the girl's size. But suppose, instead of standing there during those five minutes he picked up the girl—made off with her? It was too dangerous.

"At last we decided to make the vehicle, and thus ourselves, somewhat larger. At the risk seriously of frightening the girl, we decided to take a stature larger than the giant. Thus, since he was not armed, we would have little difficulty keeping the girl from harm.

"The forest glade within which our vehicle was hovering was ample

for the growth. We adjusted the mechanisms; and in a few moments of growth we had reached the determined point. We shut off the switches; the vehicle fell its few inches to the ground. . . .

"The scene clarified. We were in a somber forest of dull, orange-colored vegetation. Above us was a deep purple sky, with a few drifting clouds, and stars gleaming up there in the darkness. They were the stars of that last universe we had passed; unnatural of aspect, for they seemed unduly close and unduly small.

"It was not day—nor yet was it night. A queerly shimmering twilight; shadowless, for the light seemed inherent to everything.

"We were aware of all this in an instant, but we did not stop to regard it, for Time now was passing. The girl and her assailants were now, we knew, in full motion. With the flash cylinders in hand we stepped hastily from the vehicle doorway.

"The forest trees were saplings no higher than ourselves. We plunged through them, came to the other glade. The girl was sitting up with hands pressed to her breast in terror—a tiny figure of a girl not as long as my hand. The dwarfs were so small I did not see them at first; they were standing beside her—an inch perhaps in height. The giant, with what drug acting upon him we could only guess, had dwindled until he was only about half our own present height. He had dropped his tree-bludgeon, which now was too large for him, and was stooping down to seize the girl. His leer, with the reality of motion upon it, was horrible.

"Momentarily we had stopped at the edge of the glade. The figures there were aware of us. The girl screamed—a little voice, shrill with terror, an agony of sudden fear—at her assailants, and doubtless most of all at ourselves. The giant—I can no longer call him that, since we saw him as no more than three feet tall—at our appearance he straightened. Stared at us. Surprize, then fear swept his ugly hairy face. He shouted something to his tiny companions.

"Martt's hand went up; he fired his cylinder. But he was confused—and the nearness of the girl to his mark made him aim high. The bolt missed; lodged harmlessly in a tree with a ripping of its bark. I rushed forward to seize our adversary, but he eluded me, leaped over the girl. I was afraid of trampling her—I stepped backward—clutched Martt, fearful of what he might do.

"It had all happened in a moment. The dwarfs had vanished; but the other man—he was now no higher than my knees—was standing by a tree behind the girl. He shouted again; and now the terror had left his face and he was grinning, I saw his hand go swiftly to his mouth. Had he taken more of his strange drug? Had he warned his two companions to do the same? I think so, for before my eyes he was swiftly diminishing in size. I knelt carefully beside the girl. Her figure—smaller than my foot and near it—was huddled into a little ball, her head against her upraised knees. She may have fainted; I did not heed her, save to be careful my movements did not strike her. With arm stretched over her I reached for the man. But he hopped away and eluded me. Still grinning. As small now as my little finger he stood half hiding behind a grass-blade. On hands and knees I pursued him. But like an insect, he was too quick for me. Smaller always until I was probing the grass with my fingers to find him—saw him momentarily like an ant in size as he leaped into a tangle of tiny grass-blades and was gone.

"I had forgotten my weapon. Illogically I had had no desire to kill that tiny figure—only to catch it. But Martt had had no such feelings. He was stamping around the glade—try-

ing to stamp upon the other figures—and mumbling angrily to himself. I called to ask if he had caught them. He didn't know. He had seen them momentarily—seen them raise their hands to their mouths. But they had dwindled so fast, they were lost in a moment.

"The girl was unconscious, lying there in a huddled little heap. Gently I raised her, held her in the palm of my hand. She was white as a little waxen figure—white and beautiful; and so small I scarce dared to touch her with my huge rough fingers.

"Martt brought water from the lake. I rested my hand on the ground, with her still lying in it. And then presently she opened her eyes."

Brett paused, and as he gazed at each of us in turn I thought I had never seen his face so earnest. And there was upon it, too, a look almost of exaltation—a look which transfigured it. He added gently: "You three—my father, my sister, my friend, I have no need to hide from you my emotions. I think then—incongruously perhaps, for that little figure of girlhood lying there so soft and warm in the palm of my hand—I think then my love for her was born."

Hide his emotions! He could not had he wished. This love in his heart was written plain on his face, to soften it, to uplift it to something—or so it seemed to me—something just a little more than human. A touch, perchance, of divinity. And I think now that love does that—if only for some fleeting moment—to each one of us.

He went on very softly: "She opened her eyes. I was afraid she would be frightened. I tried to look very gentle, compassionate. I held my hand very still. I think that for an instant Martt and I stopped breathing. . . She opened her eyes—met mine. I saw in hers a flash of terror. But something, strangely, must have conquered it—against all reason as she stared at me. Stared while the terror faded, and her little lips parted and smiled a welcome and a thanks. . ."

CHAPTER 9

"DWINDLING GIANTS FROM LARGENESS UNFATHOMABLE"

THERE was not one of us who would have interrupted Brett when he paused to light an arrant-cylinder and to choose what next he would tell us. He was speaking softly, reminiscently, and with a curious gentleness.

"I carried her to the vehicle, showed it to her. Obviously she could understand nothing of my words; but she was very quick to read my gestures; smiling readily now, with her fear quite gone. And sitting up in the palm of my hand, with her arm flung about my thumb to steady her, she bade me raise her to my ear. Her words—the softest, the tiniest of human voices—what she said was wholly unintelligible, save that I understood her name was Leela.

"She stood beside a tree at a distance while we re-entered the vehicle and brought it down to a size normal to her; and came out of it to confront her."

Martt burst out: "I tell you that was when I realized how beautiful she is. Say, you never saw a girl like her—you can't describe it——"

"I'm not trying," said Brett with his gentle smile. "She met us—there by the vehicle—to us then, Frannie, she was about your size—perhaps a little smaller. She took our hands, laid them against her forehead as though with a gesture of welcome. And led us presently to her home—the house near by. Her father (her mother is dead) her father is a musician. Noted—very high of rank and standing among his people. A kindly old man, with gray and black hair worn long to the base of his neck. We

—Martt and I—didn't let ours grow, though as you see we took their mode of dress."

"How long were you there?" I asked.

"We slept perhaps three hundred times," he answered. "There are no days and nights—always that same half-luminous twilight. No change of seasons—or very little. It is nature in her softest mood. Nothing to struggle against—life made easy. Too easy. . . It was not we who learned Leela's language, but she, like an unnatural precocious child, who learned ours. . . We created a commotion among the people; the ruler sent for us. . . Oh, I have so much I'd like to tell you. But Martt can tell it—after——"

He checked himself suddenly. His words, some vague hint of what he almost had added, sent an ominous chill to my heart; and I saw, too, that Dr. Gryce had felt it, for a cloud came to his face and in his eyes I saw fear lurking.

But Brett went on at once: "I'd like to tell you of these people. A race at peace with nature and themselves. The struggle for existence all in the past. Decadence. The downhill grade. Only by struggle can Man progress, Father. This race, with the peak of its civilization thousands of generations in its Past, gently resting, with the inevitable decadence drawing it inexorably back to the barbarism from whence it sprung. I'd like to tell you of their customs, their government—their mode of life. . . Some other time—or Martt will tell you. . . It was all so beautiful—so romantic. . . Music—their strange, beautiful arts—Music as Leela's father gave it—Art to take the place of Science and Industry. . . You ask Martt to tell you about the dancing—the pageants, if you want to call them that, to which we went so many times with Leela. . . But just now I'm tired—I think I've talked too much—and I'm worried—and it seems to press me, against all the logic of our Science, that I have no time to spend, telling all this to you. . ."

Brett, indeed, seemed suddenly tired, or perhaps harassed at the thoughts which had come to him. I had been so absorbed—as had all of us—that we had given no heed to the passing hours. Abruptly I realized that the room was chill with early morning; through the window I saw the flush of the eastern sky.

Martt followed my glance. "Why, its dawn! Brett's been talking all night."

Brett said strangely: "Too long! Father, this gentle race living out there in such seeming security had just been visited by beings from the great world outside it. A world known to them only by legend of their past ages which they scarce knew to be true or false. Those three assailants of Leela's—and other men like them—had suddenly appeared as dwindling giants coming down out of largeness unfathomable. They had already destroyed a city. . ."

Brett's voice had risen; he was talking faster now; and there was a touch of wildness in his tone—a wildness perhaps born of his exhaustion, and the emotional stress under which I knew now he had been laboring all night.

"Our arrival there, Father—the three assailants of Leela—I think the larger, him whom we have called the 'giant'—I think he is leader of the invaders from that greater world. Our appearance—our own power to change size which perhaps he observed there in the forest—must have frightened him. The invaders vanished. But at the end of those months we lived there—another of these giants was seen.

"They're coming back again—to threaten Leela and all her people! I came here to see you, Father—to tell

you all I've told—and to leave Martt. But I'm going back—to do what I can against this threat—this invasion. And I want to go back to Leela. She——"

"She was afraid to come with us," Martt put in. "I wanted her to come—and now I want to go back with Brett. We've been arguing about it for days—he won't let me go back with him—he's stubborn——"

Brett reiterated: "I'm going back. I'm going alone. As soon as I've slept—I've got to sleep now—you, you'll excuse me—let me take a good long sleep—I'm too tired to argue about it now. . . Good night, Frannie, dear—good night, Father—good night, Frank."

He was presently gone from the room. Dr. Gryce had been sitting beside me and I put my hand on his arm. His face was quite colorless; his voice, suddenly very old and helpless, was murmuring, "I don't want him to go out there again. I'm afraid—and I don't want him to do it. . ."

CHAPTER 10

THE SOLITARY VOYAGER

"But Brett," I said, "there are one or two things I want to ask you. About your return voyage—for instance——"

It was mid-afternoon. Brett, thoroughly rested, was wholly himself again. Quiet, composed and smiling, but very determined; even a little grim. And I think he was a bit ashamed of the sudden, almost querulous way in which he had terminated his narrative and left us there in the observation room at dawn. He had had his sleep now; and had been alone for an hour with his father. Martt and Frannie had been called to them; I—an outsider—was not asked, or wanted. What took place there behind the closed door of the study, it was not for me to ask. But when they came out I knew that Brett had won. A questionable victory, for old Dr. Gryce was visibly broken; Frannie—pale and upon the verge of tears; and Martt for a time a trifle sullen; resentful that he was to be left behind. I think it hurt Brett—this fear he was bringing upon those he loved. But he was very determined; convinced that it was the right thing for him to do.

"I start back tonight, Frank," he told me soberly as he emerged from the study.

"Oh," I said. "For how long will you be gone this time?"

He hesitated. A look, which even now my memory fails to interpret, came to him. Then he smiled. "I don't know. But remember, Frank, I can return—with only those limitations the Almighty enforces—I can return to any point of earth-Time I wish. As you will live it—well, I shall aim to return here within a month."

It was then I asked him about the return voyage he and Martt had just made. "Brett, I've been wondering—did our aural ray guide you back?"

"Yes," he said. "On the voyage back, the first thing I did was to put the vehicle back through Time to a chosen instant at which I wished to arrive here on earth. When that was done, I held that instant always. We could not see the aural ray going out—when we looked back for it—for two reasons. One: Our Time had run far into earth's Future, and the ray was non-existent. The other: Even had we taken the proper Time-point, we were outrunning the light-rays themselves. In space, I mean, the aural ray left earth only with the speed of light. Our velocity exceeded that. You see? But on the return voyage we encountered the ray as we came in. A mere flash over the sky;

but its characteristic color-bands guided us."

What he said about outrunning the light-rays made me think of the myrdoscope, the image of that girl—which they had received here on earth before the voyage—that image had crossed a space 5,000,000 light-years in extent. But when I mentioned it, he explained:

"The myrdal rays are not light, Frank, but only akin to it. Their velocity—why, light beside them is a laggard. We have no way of computing the velocity of the myrdal rays. But over a finite distance such as five million light-years—for practical purposes it is instantaneous. . .

"I wanted to tell you—I was confused last night—I meant to explain that coming back I used quite a different method from the outward trip. I chanced a disturbance of some of those outlying starry universes, and when we left the Inner Surface, I made the vehicle larger instead of smaller. The void of Space shrank until about us the universes were clustered like little patches of mist—tiny areas of glowing star-dust. I saw our own, with its spectrum of the aural ray, quite readily. And had reached it with a voyage of a few hours—and then reduced our size."

"And your Time," I said. "Brett, I didn't see the vehicle until it was almost entering the earth's atmosphere. And—just for an instant—it seemed not solid, but like a vague gray ghost. Then suddenly it materialized."

He smiled and nodded. "Yes. That was when I took the earth's normal Time-rate."

The family joined us; we said no more. And that night Brett left us for his solitary voyage. I would not set down here in detail those last good-byes. Emotion repressed—it was what was not said that held a pathos I shall never forget. An outward attempt at lightness. Martt laughed, "Give my love to Leela." And Frannie said, "You tell her I'm jealous because she's so beautiful."

Just before Brett closed the door of the vehicle, Dr. Gryce spoke—the only thing he had said for an hour past.

"You'll be sure to come back, Brett? Within the month, lad?"

"Oh, yes. Yes, Father dear."

"Well—good-bye. . ."

Good-bye! I can think of no sadder word for human tongue to frame.

CHAPTER 11

BRAVE LITTLE BEACON STRIVING TO PIERCE INFINITY

THAT little month of anxious watching and waiting passed so slowly! And yet so quickly, as one by one its golden moments of hope drained away.

Brett did not return. A month, then a year, while Dr. Gryce made me leave the Service, to enter his, that all my time might be spent in watching.

A year; and now another year has passed. Brett would return within the month. With his Time-mechanism unimpaired, no delay out there in the Beyond could have affected his return to reach us during that first little month. With that passed and gone, reason could only show the futility of expecting him ever. Yet reason plays so small a part, when it would seek to kill hope.

The aural ray still burns—brave little beacon striving to pierce infinity. Beside it, for those long, unreasoning hours of vigil, Dr. Gryce sits and waits; silent, grayer and every day visibly older. The possibilities of what could have happened to Brett—that myriad of futile human conjectures—we have long since

ceased voicing. Alone, I sometimes speculate. Has Brett gone on into that outside world of which we all are only a tiny atom? What is he doing? And then I tell myself, what is it to me, save that it concerns Brett? The myriad, unfathomable happenings of Eternal Time in Infinite Space—what right have I, one tiny mortal, to probe them?

The beacon burns to guide Brett back to us. Will he ever come? I wonder. My brain, with its logic, says he will not. But my heart says, "Might he not come tonight?" Or with tonight passed, then tomorrow he will be here. Thus hope runs on and on, daunted but never broken. Blessed hope, to make possible a courageous living of this little life until we ourselves are plunged into that glowing Infinity of the Hereafter.

[THE END]

GHOST LORE

By GERTRUDE WRIGHT

There are Things we dare not name,
There are formless, nameless Things,
Silent Shapes with sable wings,
Born of Shadows and of Shame,
See them winding wo-bedight
Through the labyrinths of Night.

Creatures pallid and forlorn,
Crawling forth from new-made graves,
Riding on the winds and waves,
Other creatures yet unborn,
See them winding wo-bedight
Through the labyrinths of Night.

Progeny of Doubt and Fear,
Some walk headless o'er the hills,
Some are great, eternal Wills,
Working evil everywhere,
See them winding wo-bedight
Through the labyrinths of Night.

Writhing, twisting, serpent Things,
Coiling through the sultry skies,
Flashing, rolling, greenish eyes,
Flapping, flaming, fiery wings,
See them winding wo-bedight
Through the labyrinths of Night.

Moaning, shrieking, sighing souls,
Wailing, whining, whirling forms,
Like the voice of vanished storms,
Their despairing anthem rolls,
See them winding wo-bedight
Through the labyrinths of Night.

The Dream that came True

By VICTOR ROUSSEAU

"He resolved to make the hypnotic condition more absolute. 'Sleep!' he said, passing his hand over her eyes."

I HAD often wondered why Dr. Ivan Brodsky had never married. I had been associated with him in numbers of those cases of psychical investigation in which he had brought relief and happiness to many sufferers whose souls had capitulated to evil forces; I had heard him speak of women constantly in terms of the utmost reverence. He had indeed dimly hinted at some unforgotten love episode in his own life, but he had never confided in me, and of course I forbore to question him. It was the merest accident—if, indeed, anything be fortuitous—that revealed to me the story.

We were sitting upon the veranda of a summer hotel, a little place in the mountains to which we frequently journeyed to spend the week-end, one summer evening. With us was a stranger, a man of rare personality whom we had met the day before; and, as is often the case, we had discussed with him matters of belief and conduct on which one is silent toward acquaintances of long standing. And then came up the ever interesting question of faith.

"There is one thing that could give me back my faith," said the stranger slowly. "I was married for twenty years to a woman of the highest character; we were supremely happy together. I believe in her still, as I once believed in the consolations of religion. Yet my wife died without recognizing me, calling upon the name of some man whom I had neither seen nor heard of. Restore to me my complete confidence in her, answer that nameless question that will rise up in

NOTE—This is the tenth in a series of stories, each complete in itself, dealing with Dr. Ivan Brodsky, "The Surgeon of Souls."

the depths of my consciousness, and I will believe again."

Then, somehow—I do not remember just the sequence of words that led to it—Brodsky was telling us his story.

"I came to America when I was a young man. Through all my early struggles the friendship of one woman sustained me. I do not think there has been a moment since I first met her when I had not loved Marion Strong. But nothing was said. It was a quiet understanding that grew up between us; so that, when the rupture came, there remained nothing to be unsaid either. Marion explained nothing of the trivial incident that came to be an unbreakable barrier between us. That was her way; Marion was always proud. If she had been less proud our lives would have been different.

"I saw her only twice after her marriage. She still resided in Boston, where I was then in practise, but in a different quarter of the city. I had sought comfort in work and had succeeded in some measure in finding it when we met face to face in the rose garden that adjoins the Common. She stopped and spoke with me.

" 'You are not looking well; you must take care of your health,' I blurted out in the foolish manner of friends long sundered, who meet to interchange only banalities.

"The second meeting was at a dinner party and equally unsatisfactory. Nothing of the old friendship seemed to remain for me in that glance of friendly indifference, that word of conventional greeting. Soon afterward I heard of her marriage. Her health broke down; they hurried her to Florida, and she died there.

"Thank heaven for work! It is life's anodyne. I put her memory out of my mind to the best of my ability, for I think only the sentimentalist weaves the silken threads of longing around the cocoon of his sorrow. And then, I had no right to think of her. I worked hard, I had already achieved some measure of recognition in my profession. When the methods of the Nancy school of hypnotics were introduced into medical practise in this country, so that it was no longer considered the sign of a charlatan to make use of them, I found that I possessed unusual faculties for curing ailments of consciousness and reviving lost personalities by hypnotism. One day a woman called on me, in company with a little girl.

"The child suffered from some slight nervous ailment, common among girls of that period of life—listlessness, 'blue studies,' as the laity calls fits of abstraction, and nervousness. I prescribed some child's remedy. But when I came to look into her pupils for the examination, for just one fleeting instant the eyes of Marion seemed to look back at me. Could it be anything but hallucination? Marion's eyes were the most beautiful I have ever seen in their intelligence, their gray liquid softness. Fearfully I looked again. But only the sleepy pupils of the ailing child looked back at me.

" 'I see you do not remember me, Dr. Brodsky,' said the woman, when my investigation was ended. 'Nevertheless, I know you well, and I came to see and consult you partly out of interest. Do you not remember Marion Strickland?'

"I started involuntarily. Yes, that was the name of the man whom she married; this was a Mrs. Strickland who had brought the child to me. She was the second wife of Marion's husband, and this was her daughter. My heart leaped in my throat. Thank God, in this new marriage he had forgotten Marion; at last I might now have the right once more to turn my thoughts upon her; she was as much mine as his!

" 'Her end was curiously sudden, poor thing,' said the woman in gossiping fashion. 'She died quite unexpectedly, you know.'

" 'Yes,' I murmured, though I had been told nothing.

" 'We thought it was nothing but a congested chill until she died in Florida. Strangely, too, her last words seemed to be about you. We fancied that she tried to leave some message for you, but we could not understand her. It was some phase of the delirium, I suppose.'

"A new phase of my life opened up on that day. Marion had thought of me at the end; then she had always loved me.

"I might have known her better than to have doubted that her love could change. That her married life had been neither happy nor unhappy I had suspected; clearly this was not one of those unions that seem to transcend the limitations of our mortality, that are not severed by death. And at the end her thoughts had turned back to me. Thenceforward I had a new impulse of joy in my work; from that time, too, I began to look forward to the day when much that is hidden from us will be revealed and death will no longer sever. That was the beginning of my psychical work.

"THE years slipped by and found me still steadily at work, and with an increasing amount of patients and of reputation. I had sought in vain to communicate with Marion through all the recognized mediums. Though her inspiration remained with me, once again her outward memory had grown weak.

One evening a young man called upon me in my consulting room.

" 'I do not see new patients,' I informed him, for at that time I had already begun to withdraw from active practise in preparation for the professorship which had been offered me for the succeeding year. But he was insistent. It was not for himself, he said, that he wished my services, but for his fiancée, a girl of twenty-five. Always liable, since childhood, to nervous attacks of obscure origin, these had developed, during the past three months, into fits of imbecility, during which she became almost an automaton and manifested the most extreme aversion for him. Her friends and family had even spoken of the necessity of placing her in some institution unless she could be cured. He happened to have heard of me; would I assist him?

"The young man's earnestness, his solicitude for the girl impressed me, and I consented to take her case in hand. To my surprize I found that my patient was none other than Ethel Strickland, the girl whom I had treated some dozen years before. I looked long and I fear unprofessionally to discover whether I could discern Marion's unforgettable expression in the eyes, but the heavy pupils merely stared back at me listlessly and indolently. They were not Marion's. As the young woman was at that time in the enjoyment of normal health I left instructions that she was to be brought to my office immediately if a crisis occurred, and I went away.

"It must have been two weeks later, just as I was about to close my office and go to bed, that a loud peal at the bell startled me. The servants having retired, I opened the door in person, and ushered in the young woman. It had been raining hard and her outer garments were soaked with water. She did not attempt to remove her coat, however, nor respond to my proffered assistance, but advanced into the center of the room and stood staring at me blankly, as one bereft of reason.

"I had seen similar cases previously and diagnosed it instantly as temporary aberrancy of personality. It

was one of those rare cases in which a portion of the consciousness becomes submerged, so to speak, leaving the patient in forgetfulness as to the most simple matters connected with her daily life. Usually such cases submit readily to mild hypnotic treatment. I placed Miss Strickland under hypnosis, to which she readily yielded.

" 'Who are you?' I asked her.

" 'Why, Doctor, I am Ethel Strickland,' she answered in some surprize, mixed with a slight resentment.

" 'Why have you come here?'

" 'Doctor, did you not leave instructions that I was to come to you as soon as I experienced one of my attacks?'

"And all the while I was staring into her eyes, searching into the depths of them. But they were not Marion's eyes.

" 'You did quite right,' I answered her. 'You are well now. You will never have another of your attacks. Wake up!'

Instantly an expression of astonishment passed over her features. The waking soul had no memory of what had occurred during the period of hypnosis. She gave an exclamation of fear; then, recognizing me, seemed reassured.

" 'Dr. Brodsky!' she exclaimed. 'Where am I? How did I come here?'

" 'You are quite safe,' I answered. 'You had one of your attacks and by some providence wandered into my office. Now I am going to take you home.'

"I escorted her to her house, where I found the family in a state of alarm over the girl's disappearance. They were grateful for her safe return and especially that she was again in her normal mind. I departed, assuring them that in the improbable event of any future attack I could cure her.

"And so, convinced that my impression as to the eyes had been a hallucination, I took up my work once more. But I was to see my patient again. For a time the hypnotic suggestion was effective. Then ensued one of those little lovers' quarrels which are apt to occur among the most devoted couples. It was a trivial matter enough and yet sufficient, in her weak state of mind, to induce in the young woman another of her attacks. One evening, about the same time as before, I was again about to close my office and retire for the night, when again the bell was pulled, and the girl entered in the same dazed and perplexed condition. Again I induced a slight state of hypnosis and questioned her.

" 'Who are you?' I demanded.

"This time the young woman appeared perfectly indignant.

" 'Are you trying to make a fool of me, Dr. Brodsky?' she asked. 'You asked me that question not two minutes ago, and I have just told you that I am Ethel Strickland.'

"All her intermediate life had been wiped out; it was as though she took up the threads of this personality again where she had dropped them.

" 'And you have come to me because you had another of your attacks?' I queried.

" 'Precisely,' she replied.

" 'At least you should have got your fiancé to escort you,' I rejoined severely. 'Young ladies are not usually encouraged to go about at night alone, especially when in a distressed condition of mind. Why did you not ask his assistance?'

" 'Because I hate him,' she replied hysterically. 'He persecutes me and will not take "no" for an answer. I will never marry him—never. I can not endure the sight of him.'

" 'And yet you engaged yourself to him,' I answered.

"She raised her hand to her forehead and appeared to ponder. The question threw her into a state of terrible agitation. The young fellow

had told me that she hated him when in her imbecile phase; yet here she was, still hating him, although I had restored her faculties under hypnosis. It seemed to me that this confusion was possibly due to an alternating personality, some deeper layer or stratum of consciousness which was endeavoring to thrust itself up into the normal life. I resolved, therefore, to make the hypnotic condition more absolute.

" 'Sleep!' I said, passing my hand over her eyes. 'You have been dreaming; you have forgotten who you are. You are not Ethel Strickland. Sleep —sleep and remember. Who are you now?'

"Slowly the eyes opened. One glance and I was reeling backward, seeking to steady myself by gripping the edge of the study table. For the eyes were those of Marion Strong, clear and unclouded as on the day when I had seen her in the rose garden. If I had not seen her for a thousand years I could never forget their beauty, their quiet tenderness.

"She looked into my own; she came toward me, her arms outstretched, her face alight with ineffable happiness.

" 'Who am I?' she murmured. 'Who should I be? Do you not know me, your love, who waited for you so long?'

"I could not speak. Silently I saw her draw near, a moment later, and I felt her arms enfold me. As in a dream, through tear-dimmed eyes, I saw my head drooping in the mirror on the wall. I sank upon the lounge, and there we sat, the living and the dead, stammering and babbling happily, like two young lovers but lately parted.

" 'You have been gone so long,' she said. 'Sometimes I have despaired of ever seeing you again. How many, many years it must be since I began to fight my way upward, feeling at times that you were near me. The first time that I got my eyes open I saw you through the body of that girl. I knew you remembered me. And ever since I have struggled to overthrow her dominion, that I might see and be near you. And at last I have gained you!

" 'I should have had you always if I had not been so proud,' she whispered. 'Pride has ruined our lives. Do you remember that day I met you in the rose garden? How I longed to speak to you and could not conquer myself! And the next time at the dinner! I had to hasten away, or I could not have endured it. But now I have you with me, my love, forever——'

"WHAT answer I should have made, seeing her appealing eyes raised to mine, I do not know. But at that instant a thunderous knocking resounded on the front door and the door bell rang furiously. With a mighty effort I tore myself away.

" 'Wait for me!' I whispered, leaving her there; and I went out. At the door stood the lover of the young girl. At sight of me he caught me by the arm frantically.

" 'She is here? She is here?' he cried. 'Thank God, Doctor! I see it in your face. Let me see her! We had a foolish quarrel; we were both equally to blame, but she left me. Later I hurried to her house and found that she was not there. They hunted for her everywhere; at last somebody suggested that she might have come to you. Let me take her home!'

" 'Hush!' I answered. 'She is not herself. She has had one of her attacks. It is more severe than before. I doubt——'

" 'Tell me that you can cure her!' he cried. I wavered. My hellish designs were torn to shreds in face of his earnest plea. For, after all, this was his own life; and I had ruined

mine so many years ago. I led him into a room adjacent to my study.

"'Wait there!' I said. 'Perhaps I can cure her. But you must wait patiently till I come out.'

"'If you can cure her,' he said solemnly, 'I pledge my soul that I will guard and protect her for the whole of my life and hers.'

"Then I went in. I had half feared that my absence would have driven Marion away. But she sat there, she smiled up at me radiantly, and all my soul went out in a wild tumult of desire and anguish.

"'I may stay with you forever,' she whispered, raising her lips to mine. 'You will not drive me away, back into the darkness again? For after all, she is not really I—that girl—you know.'

"Even then, with all my soul given to hers, I heard the rapid tramp, tramp of the young man in the next room. If I yielded to her appeal; if we enjoyed the brief remaining span of life together—what then? What would be the fruits of such stolen happiness? And I wept blinding, hopeless tears. For I knew what I must do. Marion knew, too. She read it in my eyes. Her own took on an anguished appeal that wrung my heart.

"'Listen, Marion,' I said. 'We have had our own lives to spend and we have ruined them. This life is his. He is waiting here for her to come back to him. It is his right.'

"Even then she did not plead; that was Marion's way. If she had pleaded I could not have resisted.

"'And if I must go,' she murmured, 'what then? What will become of us when the weary travail of this life is spent?'

"'Why,' I replied, 'God has been so good to us. Suppose we trust Him a little longer. Suppose we do right and leave to Him the judgment?'

"She closed her eyes; she leaned closer to me, in hopeless resignation. Another moment and I must lose her forever.

"'How shall I be certain afterward that I have really had you with me?' I cried. 'How shall I be sure that this was not some frenzied dream? Give me some sign or token to remember.'

"Once again she opened her eyes and smiled at me. 'Do you remember the rose garden?' she asked softly. 'Be there tomorrow at noon and I will give you what you ask for.'

"Once I kissed her upon the forehead in eternal farewell. Then I recalled the sleeping soul of the girl. And when she opened her eyes they were Marion's no longer. She started up, but I restrained her.

"'Miss Strickland, you are safe with me—Dr. Brodsky!' I said reassuringly. 'And I have cured you of your attack. You will never have another so long as you live. Your fiancé is in the next room, waiting for you. Do you want to see him?'

"I saw a girlish blush steal over her cheeks. There was no need of answer. 'Wait for me and I will bring him to you,' I said. Then I went in to him.

"'I am going to give you back the thing that you most desire in all the world,' I said, placing my hand upon his shoulder. 'But before I do so—have you forgotten your promise to guard and care for her always?'

"'I will!' he cried; and I knew by his tone that his was no promise vainly made or to be kept lightly.

"'Forgive an older man for preaching,' I said to him. 'Remember, love is the noblest and the greatest gift that God has given us. It is not lightly to be esteemed or easily to be thrown away. Many have spoken one harsh word and atoned for it through years of suffering. Come!'

"Then I led him in. And when they met I knew that I had not acted wrongly when I made my sacrifice.

"Next day at noon I was in the rose garden that adjoins the Common. It was July, but a few blossoms still lingered upon the trees. Deep in earnest conversation they were sauntering along the shadiest walk, her arm linked through his. I would have stepped aside, but she saw and beckoned to me.

" 'Doctor,' she said, 'I can never even try to thank you enough for what you have done for me. I know last night I must have come to you during my attack; I do not remember that, but I know you cured me. And I feel that this cure will last, for I have something to live for and to remain well for.' She glanced at her fiancé shyly. 'So, as no words can thank you I want to give you a little memento of my gratitude,' she said. From the bosom of her gown she pulled a solitary flower. 'Wear this for my sake and in token of my thanks,' she said.

"I took the flower and fastened it to my coat. Then, feeling that her gaze was bent upon mine, I looked up. For one fleeting moment I could see the soft tenderness of Marion's eyes. Then they were gone, and those of the young girl shone forth happily. I turned and went across the common, leaving them there. She married him soon after, I believe, but I have never seen them since."

NEITHER of us had stirred while Brodsky told us his tale. Once or twice I caught gleams of emotion in the stranger's eyes, but we had listened silently, absorbed by the simple story. And neither of us could have been able to doubt it.

It had grown so late that even the lights of the hotel had been extinguished. The night air blew softly upon us from the broad bosom of the lake and seemed to bear upon its breath some lingering odor of roses. The stranger rose, came toward the doctor, and took him by both hands.

"You have unwittingly given me back my faith," he said. "For I know now who it was that my wife called upon when she lay dying, and why, and who it was that called. You gave her to me. Ivan Brodsky, have you forgotten me?"

The last story of this series, "The Ultimate Problem," will be published in WEIRD TALES next month.

ADVICE

By FRANK BELKNAP LONG, Jr.

Down the stairs and up the street
The kobolds go on silent feet;
And two by two the Fears parade
From portico to balustrade;
And stealing from a hidden place
The tiny goblins grin and race:
Carouse, my friend, with such as these
And shun the bloated things that wheeze!

A Story of Head-hunting Savages

THE LAND OF CREEPING DEATH

By EDNA BELL SEWARD

SAXON ROSS and I had been building bridges in Burma for the English government. When the task was finished we decided to spend a three months' vacation exploring the upper reaches of the Salween River. Its source was in the mountains of eastern Tibet but the region was an unexplored wilderness above the Burma line. It was a deep turbulent stream that flowed down through the eastern part of Burma and eventually emptied its waters into the Bay of Bengal. We started on our trip with perfect confidence in our ability to chart the Salween's source.

Naja, our native servant, cooked our simple meals and took care of the domestic end of our camp. His one great fear was that we would all become meat for the man-eating tigers which prowled in the forests.

Late in the afternoon of the third day of our journey Saxon called my attention to the wonderful parklike forest on the opposite bank of the river. At that particular point the Salween flowed sluggishly between gradually sloping hills and was only fifty yards wide.

"Let's make a raft and cross over for camp, Bryson—it's beautiful over there—hardly any undergrowth; that's surprizing, too, in this part of the country."

"I'm not surprized at anything in this part of the country," I said peevishly, as I fought the swarm of mosquitoes circling around my head—and then disproved my own words almost instantly, for Naja pointed to a small object floating in the sluggish current and called, "*Sahib*, what is that?"

I looked at the thing as it slowly drifted toward us. "It seems to be a sun-helmet," I said hesitatingly, as I watched it bobbing up and down in the water. I broke a long branch from a tree beside me, crawled out on the end of a half-submerged log, and reached for the thing as it floated by. It *was* a sun-helmet—the kind white men wear to protect themselves against the sun of India.

"Who the deuce does it belong to?" asked Saxon. "What is an Englishman doing in this wild country? The owner must be English, for this has a London trademark in it."

"Ask me something easy," I said, as I examined the wet piece of canvas. "One thing is certain—it hasn't been in the water very long. Somebody else must be exploring the Salween—what's that?"

Again it came—a faint shout—and it sounded from the opposite side of the river. "There's the owner," I laughed; "he wants his hat." Then the smile left my face, for the cry came again. It was closer and the tones clearer.

Saxon turned to me, an incredulous stare in his eyes. "By God! Bryson, if I didn't know such a thing was im-

possible, I'd say that was a woman's voice."

Again it came, still nearer than before—and there was no mistaking its accents. "Father! Father! Answer me!"

It *was* a woman—even as she wailed out her appeal she burst into view on the opposite bank from a thicket of trees. "Father!" she called again, then, catching sight of us, she stopped and clasped her hands over her heart.

"Don't be afraid!" I called. "We're Englishmen—may we help you in any way?"

"Oh, if you would! I'm *so* afraid!" She slumped down on the bank and covered her face with her hands.

"We'll be right over—soon as we can fix up a raft," I said, and joined Saxon and Naja, who were already prying out a couple of logs from the mud of the bank and rolling them into the water. She took her hands from her face and watched us.

When we stepped from the raft on her side of the river she stood up and gave us a long, appraising glance. We also studied her with undisguised curiosity—wondering what a well-bred English girl was doing in that wilderness. Her skin was browned by the sun; her gray eyes were large but they were full of tears. I noticed she was trying to keep her lips from quivering while she twisted them into a smile of welcome.

"What is troubling you?" I asked. "My friend and I are exploring the river—but may I know what you are doing in this wilderness?"

"I came with Father." Her steady voice broke on the word, but she bravely swallowed a sob and continued: "I am Naomi Harcourt; my father is Professor Harcourt of Lancaster University. There's a species of lizard Father has been studying that makes its home along the banks of this river. We have been up here a month. The other day our native guide slipped from a rock into the Salween and was drowned; since then Father and I have been entirely alone. Last night we camped in that ravine back there," pointing behind her to the thin woods. "This morning I was tired, so Father went out for his daily specimen hunt by himself. He always comes back to rest at noon—I am afraid something dreadful has happened to him."

She was frankly crying by the time she finished, and Saxon's eyes met mine significantly. I knew he was thinking of the sun-helmet we had found floating in the Salween—and I breathed a prayer of thankfulness that it had been left on the opposite bank, along with the bulk of our luggage. Saxon tried to reassure her—but to one who knew him well his voice did not ring true. "Probably, Miss Harcourt, your father has simply lost his way and will come walking into camp any minute now. If you like, we will keep you company until he turns up."

His words comforted her and she dried her eyes as she sighed, "Oh, if you would!"

Then I broke in: "It's the most fortunate thing in the world that we ran across you."

"Isn't it?" she said in a relieved tone. "Father insisted this country was no place for me and didn't want me to come—but I have always traveled with him since Mother died."

I encouraged her to talk—it relieved the nervous tension under which she was laboring. While she chatted we walked toward the ravine where their camp was pitched, and soon we saw the gleam of the two small tents beneath the trees. It was an ideal camping spot; a winding stream made a sharp-pointed peninsula out of a small cool glade; but despite its seeming security I recalled the tales I had been told of the tigers

that infested the forest-covered hills in that district.

I wondered at her dreamy imbecile father—for he *must* be an imbecile to bring a woman into such a country and then leave her unprotected for even an hour. But I remembered the sun-helmet we had taken from the water and my heart softened. Poor devil! I knew he was at the bottom of the Salween; no human being, unaided, could struggle out of the stream's swift current—its undertow was relentless.

But we did not dare tell Naomi Harcourt that. We decided it would be a kindness to wait until morning—she looked so worried and tired. Besides, her trustful eyes had made a strong appeal to my rather phlegmatic emotions. She seemed so confident of our ability to take care of her, I registered a vow in my heart that she should not find her confidence misplaced. But it was no light task to keep her mind free from worry over her missing father; however, we did our best while Naja cooked the evening meal.

Afterward we sat around the campfire chatting and discovering mutual acquaintances back in London. She laughed often at our jokes—delicious peals of laughter that showed the dimple in her left cheek and the perfect whiteness of her teeth. Before it was time to retire we were all her willing slaves—even Naja respectfully worshiping the "white *Memsahib*" at a distance. She was singularly free from all feminine affectation, and it hurt deep in the better part of our souls, when she accepted so trustingly our theory that her father had simply lost his way and would come back into camp in the morning.

Her faith in us sent her smilingly to her small sleeping tent, and I was glad when Saxon allowed me to take the first watch without protest. He took himself, and his shamed, troubled eyes, away to the professor's small tent, where Naja was already curled up on the ground before its entrance.

I was glad to be alone—I wanted to smoke and think of Naomi's eyes and wish I had the right to take her in my arms and comfort her when the first wave of grief over her father's death should flood her soul. She was the type of woman men instinctively wish to protect, and I sat for a long time over the dying fire thinking of her gray eyes.

I refilled my pipe and then leaned back against a tall tree trunk, my repeating rifle across my knees. Saxon and I always took turns watching throughout the night in that wild country. It had grown very still—the moon came up and flooded the open space around the camp with silver. The only sound that reached my ears was the murmur of the stream as it crept through the low undergrowth in the ravine, on its way to the river.

As I leaned against the tree my back was toward the stream that circled the land behind me. Suddenly I heard a soft splash in the water. I turned quickly and caught a vague glimpse of a naked human form creeping toward me. I aimed my rifle and fired. Instantly blood-curdling yells came from all sides of the glade and a horde of black gleaming bodies swarmed into view.

I emptied my gun among them—the chance to protect Naomi Harcourt had come! The black oiled bodies of the advancing men did not look like Shan natives; their gleaming eyeballs and flashing teeth, as they yelled their war-cry, gave them the appearance of demons spawned in the darkness of the forest.

My gun had done such execution among them that only two had crossed the stream when Saxon leaped from the tent and his rifle caused

another halt. During that pause Naomi flew across the open space toward me. She looked like a dryad in her long white night-robe, with her thick hair loose over her shoulders.

At the sight of her a hoarse shout went up from the blacks and they surged forward again. I swung her behind me and lifted my rifle, which I had loaded while Saxon held them at bay; when I finished the task my cartridge belt was empty—and our extra ammunition was with our camp supplies on the farther bank of the Salween.

Naja was kneeling beside Saxon wailing, "Shoot, Sahib Ross! Shoot to kill!—they are the Wa people on a head-hunting raid!"

I noted then, for the first time, that the black men had no firearms. They took our deadly rifle fire coolly, closing their depleted ranks with the seemingly endless swarm of men behind. They carried long, wicked-looking machetes in their hands, but they seemed determined to overpower us by the weight of their numbers.

At Naja's wailing words, Saxon stepped closer to my side—speech was not necessary between us. We formed a wall with our bodies between the slender, helpless white girl and the horde of blacks that had glimpsed her beauty in the moonlight. We had heard of the Wa people and knew of their impregnable villages in the highlands on the eastern side of the Salween. For years they had defied all efforts of the British government to civilize them.

They were a tribe that believed the ghost of a dead man lingered in his skull and would keep away the invisible demons of the air from their villages and lands. Every year they sent out a head-hunting expedition to obtain fresh skulls—as they believed at seeding time the demons were most active and would bewitch the seed and the soil. Their cultivated lands were surrounded by rows of posts hung with human skulls; their village streets were ornamented the same way. The peaceful Shan natives called the Wa territory "the land of creeping death." So I understood Saxon's meaning when he said grimly, "Save a bullet for Naomi."

Even in the stress of that moment I noticed that he also thought of her by her first name. As I drew a bead on a swarthy brute I caught a glimpse of swaying underbrush at the right—some of them had managed to cross the stream, very deep at that point, and were trying to attack us in the rear. I left the ugly beast in front of me to Saxon and swung around in time to fire at two oily bodies breaking through the underbrush almost behind us.

Naomi saw them at the same time. She rose from her crouching posture and I felt her slender hands at my holster. The next instant she was clutching my revolver. Her body swayed against me, making my heart jump. I dared not take my eyes from that swaying mass of shrubbery where the blacks were concealed, but I sensed her glorious womanhood—her appealing helplessness; and I shivered as I pictured the inevitable end of the conflict. No three men could long withstand that writhing, screaming, yet steadily advancing horde; we must soon be swept into oblivion by the very weight of their numbers.

Saxon's repeating rifle was spitting sullenly beside me; his cartridge belt was half full, so I reloaded my gun while he cursed the cringing front ranks of blacks. "Damn you, take that!" he snarled—his rifle barked and a black body bounded into the air and fell forward to be trampled by the advancing lines behind.

Then Naomi screamed. I took my eyes from the swaying bushes at my right in time to see a score of the demons closing in from the left. I fired desperately among them, but a

close whiff of rancid grease made me turn to the right again. A naked oily native was standing beside me with gleaming machete raised to strike. A revolver shot sent him sprawling—it was Naomi. She had saved me from butchery for the moment. But my rifle was empty—so was Saxon's. I used mine as a club on a screaming brute who reached for the girl. As he went down I dodged a shining blade and brought the butt of my gun down on the arm holding the machete.

Again Naomi fired. I yelled, "Save a bullet for yourself!" but she did not hear me. I caught a glimpse of her set white face as she stood with her back to the tree, firing telling shots. Naja was trying to protect her with the small dagger he carried. I saw him sink it into the throat of a squat beast who grabbed at her hair. I yelled encouragement and he screamed back a prayer to the heathenish god he worshiped.

I heard Saxon cursing his Maker as he struggled fruitlessly to reach Naomi's side. I swung my clubbed gun in a vicious circle but the stock snapped on a thick skull; hands reached for me—I saw black fingers tearing the white robe from Naomi's shoulders. The sight made me frantic—her eyes were set in dull horror as she fought the big beast who was tearing her clothing.

My bellow of rage was answered by Saxon's—he had glimpsed the same scene. Then I smashed the arm of a howling fiend, snatched his machete and swung around to the girl's defense. I saw Saxon go down beneath a wave of screaming savages—I saw Naja sobbing with anger as he fought against the firm grip of two naked blacks—and all the time the machete in my hands rose and fell in the midst of that pressing circle. Step by step I advanced through a veritable river of blood to the spot where the girl had fallen senseless at the foot of the tree. I was glad she was unconscious; it would be harder to run that reddened blade through her heart while her terrified eyes were on my face.

A glancing blow on the back of my head staggered me—hands pulled at my legs and arms. But I threw them off. I knew I had to die and there was one earthly task I must finish first. I must run that machete through Naomi's heart—she must not be left to that horde of savages.

I reached her side—she lay white and still at my feet—for a fleeting instant I allowed myself to think how lovely she was—then I sternly put the thought away. I gritted my teeth—forcing my cringing hands to direct the blade toward her heart—then a crashing blow on my head sent me reeling headlong and blackness enveloped the world.

The weird persistent beating of a drum was the first impression my brain registered when I returned to consciousness. I opened my eyes and found myself staring at a row of grinning skulls suspended from the ceiling of a high thatched roof. There was a movement beside me—I blinked and stared wonderingly; Naomi was bending over me and the light in her gray eyes sent a thrill through my veins. Then I heard Saxon's voice, "Bryson, old chap, how do you feel?"

His face came within my range of vision and I saw a bandage was around his temples—I recognized it as part of the shirt he had been wearing on the day we met Naomi. Suddenly the fight in the glade came back to me. I raised up and immediately clutched my aching head with both hands and discovered it also was bandaged.

After my vision cleared I looked about me. We were in a large bare hut with rush-woven walls and a

high thatched roof. Rows of grinning skulls hung from the ceiling and the air was heavy with the fetid odor of decaying flesh. I brought my gaze back to Saxon's face and he nodded to the question he saw in my eyes.

"Yes, we are prisoners in a Wa village. I don't know why we were not killed at once—Naja said there is something in their religious belief that makes it necessary for them to take their victims alive." He stopped, and my eyes followed his to the distant spot where Naomi had withdrawn. She was trying to fasten her torn gown on the shoulder.

"Where is Naja?" I asked.

"I don't know. They took him away a while ago—he understands their lingo and has already learned that the fight we put up places us high in their estimation. God knows how many devils we killed—you did fine work with that machete, Bryson. They pulled me down and then fell over me so fast I was not seriously hurt—but we thought you were dead—one of the brutes hit you with a heavy club."

"And Naomi?" I asked.

"Is uninjured—so far." He added the last in a low voice. "I saw you trying to reach her with the machete," he went on in a whisper; "God knows it would have been better—now we are weaponless, and when we entered the village I saw their king looking at her——"

He stopped and gritted his teeth. I glanced over at Naomi. She had turned away until only her profile showed in the dark room. It looked pure, high-bred, delicate. A wave of physical nausea went over me as I mentally pictured that brute of a Wa king feasting his eyes on her. "I'll kill her with my bare hands first!" I whispered fiercely, and he nodded approval—which showed that his thoughts had been following my own.

As the day drew to a close, food was placed before us by silent curious-eyed women. The guards laughed and joked while they lounged on the hard earth before the open door. Occasionally they peered in at us and we saw the murderous-looking machetes at their belts. Eventually darkness fell; as the room grew black Naomi crept closer to my side. When loud voices sounded near she groped for my hand. I heard her sigh contentedly when my fingers closed over hers. She did not know how madly the blood was coursing in my veins at the touch of her soft palm—how the fragrant nearness of her made me forget for moments at a time that we all must die—for there was no escape.

Saxon had explained that the walls of the village were constructed like a fort; it was situated on a high hill surrounded by a deep ditch over which a drawbridge was built. The only approach was over that drawbridge and through a winding tunnel that led upward to the inner ramparts. This tunnel was heavily guarded and the houses of the tribe were built inside the fort around the huge sun-burnt square I had glimpsed through the doorway.

Naomi broke a long silence by saying, "Mr. Ross has told me that you found Father's helmet in the Salween. I know he is dead—but it is much better for him than this." Her voice broke and the next moment I pulled her gently into my arms and she was sobbing on my breast. The room was utterly black but I knew Saxon realized Naomi was in my arms—that it was I to whom she had turned for comfort.

Hours passed; Naomi cried herself to sleep on my shoulder—then, suddenly, I heard heavy breathing behind me! Its quality chilled my heart—it sounded like a wounded animal fighting the death-rattle. I suffered agony as I listened—even while some instinct kept me motion-

less, holding my breath. Saxon must have been dozing, for he did not move until a faint whisper came, "*Sahibs, Sahibs,* are you there?"

It was Naja—I heard the slight rustling of the leaves on the floor as he dragged himself through the loose rushes of the hut's side and crept toward us—guided by our low whispers. Occasionally a moan escaped him and I knew by his fearful breathing that he was mortally hurt. At his first low words I was thankful the girl in my arms was sleeping the sleep of utter exhaustion and could not hear. "*Sahibs,* there is no hope—you die tomorrow when the noon sun shines down over the new rice-field. It has just been cleared of the jungle vines, ready to be flooded for the planting. Your blood is to be sprinkled over the ground and your heads go on the posts."

"But the *Memsahib,*" I broke in; "what are their plans for her?"

The rattle in his throat grew louder. "She goes to the king—when I heard, I tried to steal a dagger to bring to her—they caught me, I was beaten and left for dead. They threw my body aside for the head man's knife, but I regained my senses and dragged myself here—to—warn—I choke—*Sahibs*—I——"

There was a long struggling breath, then silence.

I heard Saxon moving in the darkness and I knew he was feeling for Naja's pulse. After a while I heard him sobbing. "He's dead, Bryson; I've been feeling his body—one leg is broken and he's been hacked fearfully with machetes; yet he dragged himself here to warn us——" His voice broke and there was silence.

My own eyes were wet as I recalled that Naja was a heathen who worshiped idols of stone—but I did not fear for the soul that had just taken flight from his tortured body.

Daylight found us wan-eyed and despairing. The precious burden on my breast grew doubly dear as the hour approached when I must send her soul to her Maker undefiled. Saxon and I could face death with stoicism—but we could not leave Naomi for the Wa king. Yet my heart recoiled from the task I had set myself to perform—cowardlike I put off the moment as long as possible.

She opened her eyes as I gazed longingly into her face. The guards outside the open door were being changed and the sound of their voices awakened her. Saxon had drawn Naja's body into the hut's darkest corner and covered it with leaves, with which the floor was plentifully sprinkled. Then he sat with his back turned so that I could have those precious last moments alone with the girl I loved. Time passed—we heard shouting and laughter outside in the square—yet still Naomi lived—the longer I gazed into her sweet gray eyes the weaker grew my will. "Just a little more time," I would whisper to my fainting spirit, "just a little more time—then I will take this bandage from my head, fasten it around her white throat and twist it until she is dead. I *must* do it—there is no other way!"

But when I looked at her white neck and pulsing throat I turned craven. If only I had a gun or a knife it would be easier—but to *torture* her!

Suddenly the guards came through the door and ordered us, by gestures, out into the street. Then it was too late, for they bound my hands behind me. At the last moment, cursing myself for a coward, I tried to snatch one of their machetes and run it through her heart—but they beat me down and took the weapon from my frenzied hands.

Saxon spoke on the way out. "You couldn't do it, Bryson—neither could

I. We are cowards—may God forgive us!"

Naomi walked between two black brutes who held her arms in a viselike grip. We crossed a square between rows of gaping natives, passed through a wide gate in the ramparts, descended a hill and found ourselves in a large cultivated valley. At one side of this valley was a tract of newly cleared land, some ten acres wide, and we reached it by a street lined with high posts, each holding a grinning skull.

We found the king and his attendants beneath a large tree on the edge of the newly cleared land—he was seated in a bamboo litter held by four slaves. I did not feel as a man ought to feel who is going to die—I was not thinking of myself at all, but of Naomi, and when I saw the salacious light in the Wa king's eyes, I cursed the weakness that kept me from strangling her to death. He was a fat ugly brute, and when Naomi was brought before him she screamed and shrank away, as he reached out a paw and touched her arm.

Saxon went white at that scream and strained frantically at his bonds. I went mad—a bestial madness, that sent me charging head-first, like an angry bull, at that bundle of reeking flesh in the bamboo litter. I reached him just as he rose to pull Naomi forcibly toward him, and my head landed forcibly in his greasy paunch; he grunted and fell over backward in the litter.

Then I was grabbed by my angry guards and hurried out into the center of the huge sun-baked field and bound securely to a post. Saxon was fastened to a similar one a few feet away. The blazing sun beat fiercely in my eyes; my head ached from the force with which I had driven it into the king's greasy paunch. I could see Naomi lying, a crumpled heap of white, beneath the tree beside the king's litter. She had fainted, and I prayed desperately that she would never open her eyes again.

I saw two natives coming toward us with gleaming machetes in their hands. I knew I had but a few seconds to live; at such tense moments it is surprizing what small things attract one's attention. I could not think of my coming death, for my mind was obsessed with the humming of an insect—a bee evidently—that I could hear buzzing behind me.

It droned again and I turned my head to see how close it was to my ear. The sun was pouring into my eyes and for a moment I thought I had gone mad. Then the droning began again, and after another glance at the heavens I gave a shout. "Saxon! look!—an airplane!"

The Wa king saw it at the same time—he gave one shriek of fear as he leaped from the litter and ran for the safety of his fortification on the hill. His people followed, screaming frantically with terror.

After the big military machine landed and Saxon and I were being freed from our bonds by the lieutenant in charge, he said, "I knew something was wrong when I spied that bunch of natives through my field-glasses. Luckily for you my pilot was flying low, hunting for a landing place so he could tighten up our steering gear."

As soon as my arms were free I hurried across the field to Naomi—still a quiet huddled heap beneath the tree. She opened her eyes as I lifted her into the cockpit of the flying machine; then she shrank closer into my arms as she realized her scant attire. The lieutenant handed me his coat, and once wrapped in its protecting folds, she sat up and listened with interest to his explanation of his presence in that territory at such an opportune time. It seemed that he was on an experimental trip from Calcutta to Canton, China. To

avoid the air currents around the high mountains on the dividing line between Burma and China he turned to the northeast, which brought him directly over the Wa country.

"Now I'll take you people back to Mandalay," he finished, "and when I return I think I'll drop a bomb or two on that stronghold of devils; it may make them hesitate another time when they are tempted to capture white people on their head-hunting raids."

The big machine roared over the ground and took the air like a great bird. The others peered curiously down as we passed over the village on the hill. I peered down, too—but not at the Wa people; I was gazing into the eyes of the girl I loved, while she smiled up at me from the shelter of my breast.

Cagliostro, St. Germain, Murrell, and Others

SORCERY PAST *and* PRESENT

By MARGUERITE LYNCH ADDIS

BROUGHT up to date by some unprejudiced historian, the annals of sorcery might perhaps include names surprizing to the average reader. The world, however, now considers itself grown up, and a large number of taxpayers who in earlier days would have been seized as sorcerers and escorted to the stake, there to become a total loss, are now tolerantly relegated to whichever of the various ologies and isms they seem to belong, and allowed to flourish or not, as circumstances and the finances of their clients permit.

This is a very different state of affairs from the eager credulity which led to so many witch-burnings in the Middle Ages, or the pitiable materialism of a later date, which explained the unexplainable by the rather feeble assertion that it didn't exist, and which smugly dismissed quite credible evidence to the contrary as evidence of drunkenness, lunacy—or anything, in short, except evidence of things beyond its philosophy — and which rather suggested the bluster which struggles to camouflage fear.

But even in the days when astrology, palmistry, crystal-gazing — all the means of divination—were regarded as sorcery, and quite as compromising as direct connivance with Beelzebub, and when an accusation of dabbling in these mysteries often meant death; then, as now, people hurried to consult their favorite sorcerer. Only they went at night, usually.

Whether or not the famous sorcerers of history really possessed the powers credited to them, they all seem to have fallen down lamentably in respect of defending themselves, or even of avoiding a painful and igno-

minious death. Nor was sorcery in high life more innocuous to its devotees than to humbler persons.

Gilles de Retz, or de Rais, one-time Marshal of France, and commander in the field with Joan of Arc, lost his life on this account, although his high connections used their influence to ensure the more dignified charge of heresy against him.

Outwardly a devout dignitary of the Church, he was said to practise the Black Art privately, and is sometimes mentioned as the original of Bluebeard, but except for the color of his beard, which actually appeared blue in certain lights, there is little in history to identify him with that alarming gentleman. His reputed victims were not a succession of beauteous but sadly inquisitive brides, but innocent infants, whose blood he required in his scientific researches for the Elixir of Life. S. R. Crockett has given a vivid picture of him in his novel, *The Black Douglas*, which is based on this sanguinary legend. It is related that Gilles de Retz caused to be kidnaped and murdered more than eight hundred children, the discovery of whose bones in a tower of his château at Champtoce ultimately led to his conviction. Mr. Crockett tells us that werewolves aided de Retz in these nocturnal kidnapings, resuming their normal form of servants at the château during the daytime.

Apropos of this, Elliott O'Donnell, in his book on werewolves, gives directions for the attaining of lycanthropy, or werewolfery. He quotes the proper incantation in full, and the ingredients for the enchanted salve to be rubbed on the body of the candidate, and even the locality most favorable for the ceremony. Where wolves abound, one might experiment with this curious spell, but in the event of success, the appearance of a lone wolf in a district hitherto free of them might be productive of unpleasant consequences.

Returning to Gilles de Retz, readers of *The White Company* will remember that the wife of the French warrior Du Guesclin, the Lady Tiphaine, foretold the future of the young Sir Nigel, in one of her prophetic trances. This lady, known to her contemporaries as a "fairy woman" by right of these trances and other supernormal traits, was an ancestress of Gilles de Retz.

In the year 1440, de Retz was hanged — some say burned — at Nantes, after a full confession. Later, it was officially stated that he was innocent of the crimes imputed to him, and his memory reinstated, but public opinion remained prejudiced against him, and in any case it was a little late for de Retz to profit much by it.

Others even more highly placed were not more fortunate. The Earl of Mar, a brother of James III of Scotland, was accused of employing the arts of witches and sorcerers to shorten the king's days, and he was summarily bled to death in his own apartment, without even the semblance of a trial.

Janet Douglas, Lady Glamis, also suffered for the same offense, and was executed in 1573. Glamis Castle (now belonging to the family of the Duchess of York) has ever been the scene of weird happenings, and its very walls are saturated with legend. Apparitions are legion there: it is only reasonable to suppose that the ill-fated Janet Douglas stalks among them.

The fate of the witches and sorcerers with whom these two luckless plotters connived is unknown; we are free to assume that they were perhaps so fortunate as to die in their beds.

It seems not to have occurred to our forebears that magic (other than the strictly divinatory kind) could be used for any other purpose than the

confusion of their enemies, by which they themselves often benefited so obviously that there was not much hope of concealing their connection with it. It is scarcely to be wondered at that magicians practised their art by stealth, and shivered, even if they did not blush, to find it fame. Certainly one does not hear much of either witches or sorcerers being fêted or entertained in a social sense until a much later period.

TOWARD the middle of the Eighteenth Century the Comte St. Germain was to dazzle a sophisticated Paris, not alone with his magical mysteries, but with his social fascinations. Old enough to have known better (if we credit his assertion that he had lived two thousand years by the aid of his secret Elixir of Life), he allowed himself to become a lounge lizard at the court of Louis XV of France, where he was spoiled by ladies, acclaimed by the intelligentsia as master-musician and linguist, and entrusted with secret missions by the king himself. The Comte was in demand, too, with the alchemists, who sought to learn his secret process of removing flaws from diamonds, and of transmuting the baser metals into gold. If he had contented himself with his brilliant social successes, and the beauty salves and pastes which the fair ladies of the court lauded as youth-renewing, he might have manifested the ability of at least one sorcerer to keep out of trouble. Wizards, however, seem unable to keep out of politics, and the accomplished Comte was no exception, and was obliged to flee to England in 1760, in consequence. According to his pupil, the no less famous Balsamo, or Cagliostro, he founded Freemasonry in Germany, after a prolonged visit to Russia. The Landgrave Charles of Hesse studied secret sciences under him. He is said to have died at Schleswig near the end of the Eighteenth Century, but people solemnly swore to having seen him in Paris as late as 1889. He maintained to the end the mystery of his origin, nor can authorities agree, to this day, whether he was Italian, Spanish or Polish.

Of his pupil, Cagliostro, more is definitely known. It is pretty well established that he was born at Palermo in 1743, although he, like the Comte St. Germain, claimed to have lived many centuries by the use of the Elixir of Life. Dumas' novel, *Memoirs of a Physician*, is based on his life, and Dumas makes of him a fascinating figure; sinister, but the reverse of ignoble. The novelist, of course, took liberties with facts, but he represents the sorcerer as extremely handsome, and of extraordinary cultivation. His wife, Lorenza Feliciani, is also considerably whitewashed by Dumas, if we may believe the historians, who between them have not left the poor woman a shred of character, although they all concede her remarkable beauty.

Carlyle calls the sorcerer a "dusky, bull-necked, mastiff-faced, sinister-looking individual" with a "greasy, prophetic, bulldog face." According to him, Cagliostro was a supremely vulgar charlatan, given credence only by the most ignorant, but it is difficult to reconcile this description of him with the undoubted vogue he had for a long time among people more than a little fastidious. Carlyle, in his *Miscellanies*, gives a detailed account of the Diamond Necklace affair, in which Cagliostro was implicated, and which caused the hapless Marie Antoinette so much anguish. He, also, could not keep his fingers out of politics, and it was this, together with his attempts to establish what he called Egyptian Freemasonry, that finally led to his imprisonment in the Bastille, where he was separated from his wife by only a few cells, although neither was aware of

this circumstance. Later, in England, he was moved to write his famous letter in which he declared that Frenchmen needed only one thing to make them the most favored of mankind. This one thing was, he explained, the certainty of sleeping unmolested in their beds when they were innocent. He became the fashion in England, as in France. His love philters, beauty lotions and predictions (many of which were fulfilled) caused his house to be besieged at all hours of the day and night, and whenever he showed himself he was sure of an ovation. All this did not prevent his book on Egyptian Freemasonry from being publicly burnt, and he finally died a prisoner in the fortress-prison of St. Leo in 1795.

It is refreshing to turn to a magician who, with a little license, may almost be called a contemporary, since he died as late as 1860, and—unique distinction!—died in his own bed, in his own home, at the very hour foretold by himself.

Cunning Murrell, of Hadleigh, England, was the seventh son of a seventh son, and on these grounds alone, according to his biographer, Arthur Morrison, would have felt justified in considering himself a born sorcerer. He had, however, a very complete system of divination, in which he himself implicitly believed, and when the exercise of his "lawful magic arts" (his own expression) once resulted in the unexpected exposure of his own daughter as the witch who had been causing trouble to the animal and human population of Hadleigh, he seems to have entertained no question of his own infallibility as a wizard, but at once proceeded to exorcise the unfortunate lady. Twenty-five years ago Cunning Murrell's son was living, and very willing to tell what he knew of his father's powers, which were still deeply venerated in Hadleigh.

The late Lord Lytton could have in all modesty styled himself a sorcerer, by ancient standards, and in certain of his writings, especially *The House and the Brain*,* he allows some of his magical erudition to leak out. Sax Rohmer's book, *The Romance of Sorcery*, crowns several hitherto unsuspected persons with sorcerous laurels.

From all of which it may be concluded that sorcery is a much less dangerous art than formerly, and also much more lucrative. Edicts of Louis XIV of France and George II of England abolished all criminal procedure on the subject of sorcery and witchcraft in their dominions, which was undoubtedly the beginning of brighter days for the sorcerers.

That these particular days are still brighter for them, none can doubt who read the personal columns of the newspapers, and even if we no longer stick pins in the wax effigies of our enemies for their undoing, or direct the Evil Eye upon our neighbors' livestock, there are few of us who can conscientiously affirm that they have never bribed a modern sorcerer to lift the veil of the future for us;—and is not this the very essence of sorcery?

* Reprinted in WEIRD TALES, May, 1923.

WEIRD STORY REPRINT

*The Song of Triumphant Love**

By IVAN TURGENIEFF

This is what I read in an old Italian manuscript:

1

ABOUT the middle of the Sixteenth Century there were living in Ferrara (it was at that time flourishing under the scepter of its magnificent archdukes, the patrons of the arts and poetry) two young men, named Fabio and Muzzio. They were of the same age, and of near kinship, and were scarcely ever apart; the warmest affection had united them from early childhood . . . the similarity of their positions strengthened the bond. Both belonged to old families; both were rich, independent, and without family ties; tastes and inclinations were alike in both. Muzzio was devoted to music, Fabio to painting. They were looked upon with pride by the whole of Ferrara, as ornaments of the court, society and town. In appearance, however, they were not alike, though both were distinguished by a graceful, youthful beauty. Fabio was taller, fair of face and flaxen of hair, and he had blue eyes. Muzzio, on the other hand, had a swarthy face and black hair, and in his dark brown eyes there was not the merry light, nor on his lips the genial smile of Fabio; his thick eyebrows overhung narrow eyelids, while Fabio's golden eyebrows formed delicate half-circles on his pure, smooth brow. In conversation, too, Muzzio was less animated. For all that, the two friends were both alike looked on with favor by ladies, as well they might be, being models of chivalrous courtliness and generosity.

At the same time there was living in Ferrara a girl named Valeria. She was considered one of the greatest beauties in the town, though it was very seldom possible to see her, as she led a retired life, and never went out except to church, and on great holidays for a walk. She lived with her mother, a widow of noble family, though of small fortune, who had no other children. In everyone whom Valeria met she inspired a sensation of involuntary admiration, and an equally involuntary tenderness and respect, so modest was her mien, so little, it seemed, was she aware of all the power of her own charms. Some, it is true, found her a little pale; her eyes, almost always downcast, expressed a certain shyness, even timidity; her lips rarely smiled, and then only faintly; her voice scarcely anyone had heard. But the rumor went that it was most beautiful, and that, shut up in her own room, in the early morning when everything still slumbered in the town, she loved to sing old songs to the sound of the lute, on which she used to play herself. In spite of her pallor, Valeria was blooming with health; and even old people, as they gazed on her, could not but think, "Oh, how happy the youth for whom that pure maiden bud, still enfolded in its petals, will one day open into full flower!"

* Translated from the Russian.

2

Fabio and Muzzio saw Valeria for the first time at a magnificent public festival, celebrated at the command of the Archduke of Ferrara, Ercol, son of the celebrated Lucrezia Borgia, in honor of some illustrious grandees who had come from Paris on the invitation of the Archduchess, daughter of the French king Louis XII. Valeria was sitting beside her mother on an elegant tribune, built after a design of Palladio, in the principal square of Ferrara, for the most honorable ladies in the town. Both Fabio and Muzzio fell passionately in love with her on that day; and, as they never had any secrets from each other, each of them soon knew what was passing in his friend's heart. They agreed together that both should try to get to know Valeria; and if she should deign to choose one of them, the other should submit without a murmur to her decision. A few weeks later, thanks to the excellent renown they deservedly enjoyed, they succeeded in penetrating into the widow's house, difficult though it was to obtain an entry to it; she permitted them to visit her. From that time forward they were able almost every day to see Valeria and to converse with her; and every day the passion kindled in the hearts of both young men grew stronger and stronger. Valeria, however, showed no preference for either of them, though their society was obviously agreeable to her. With Muzzio, she occupied herself with music but she talked more with Fabio, with him she was less timid. At last, they resolved to learn once for all their fate, and sent a letter to Valeria, in which they begged her to be open with them, and to say to which she would be ready to give her hand. Valeria showed this letter to her mother, and declared that she was willing to remain unmarried, but if her mother considered it time for her to enter into matrimony, then she would marry whichever one her mother's choice should fix upon. The excellent widow shed a few tears at the thought of parting from her beloved child; there was, however, no good ground for refusing the suitors, she considered both of them equally worthy of her daughter's hand. But as she secretly preferred Fabio, and suspected that Valeria liked him the better, she fixed upon him. The next day Fabio heard of his happy fate, while all that was left for Muzzio was to keep his word, and submit.

And this he did; but to be the witness of the triumph of his friend and rival was more than he could do. He promptly sold the greater part of his property, and collecting some thousands of ducats, he set off on a far journey to the East. As he said farewell to Fabio, he told him that he should not return till he felt that the last traces of passion had vanished from his heart. It was painful to Fabio to part from the friend of his childhood and youth . . . . but the joyous anticipation of approaching bliss soon swallowed up all other sensations, and he gave himself up wholly to the transports of successful love.

Shortly after, he celebrated his nuptials with Valeria, and only then learnt the full worth of the treasure it had been his fortune to obtain. He had a charming villa, shut in by a shady garden, a short distance from Ferrara; he moved thither with his wife and her mother. Then a time of happiness began for them. Married life brought out in a new and enchanting light all the perfections of Valeria. Fabio became an artist of distinction—no longer a mere amateur, but a real master. Valeria's mother rejoiced, and thanked God as she looked upon the happy pair.

Four years flew by unperceived, like a delicious dream. One thing only was wanting to the young

couple, one lack they mourned over as a sorrow: they had no children . . . but they had not given up all hope of them. At the end of the fourth year they were overtaken by a great, this time a real sorrow; Valeria's mother died.

Many tears were shed by Valeria; for a long time she could not accustom herself to her loss. But another year went by; life again asserted its rights and flowed along its old channel. And behold, one fine summer evening, unexpected by everyone, Muzzio returned to Ferrara.

3

During the whole space of five years that had elapsed since his departure no one had heard anything of him; all talk about him had died away, as though he had vanished from the face of the earth. When Fabio met his friend in one of the streets of Ferrara he almost cried out aloud, first in alarm and then in delight, and he at once invited him to his villa. There happened to be in his garden there a spacious pavilion, apart from the house; he proposed to his friend that he should establish himself in this pavilion. Muzzio readily agreed and moved thither the same day together with his servant, a dumb Malay—dumb but not deaf, and indeed, to judge by the alertness of his expression, a very intelligent man. His tongue had been cut out.

Muzzio brought with him dozens of boxes, filled with treasures of all sorts collected by him in the course of his prolonged travels. Valeria was delighted at Muzzio's return; and he greeted her with cheerful friendliness, but composure; it could be seen in his every action that he had kept the promise given to Fabio. During the day he completely arranged everything in order in his pavilion; aided by his Malay, he unpacked the curiosities he had brought; rugs, silken stuffs, velvet and brocaded garments, weapons, goblets, dishes and bowls, decorated with enamel, things made of gold and silver, and inlaid with pearl and turquoise, carved boxes of jasper and ivory, cut bottles, spices, incense, skins of wild beasts, and feathers of unknown birds, and a number of other things, the very use of which seemed mysterious and incomprehensible. Among all these precious things there was a rich pearl necklace, bestowed upon Muzzio by the king of Persia for some great and secret service; he asked permission of Valeria to put this necklace with his own hand about her neck; she was struck by its great weight and a sort of strange heat in it . . . it seemed to burn to her skin. In the evening after dinner as they sat on the terrace of the villa in the shade of the oleanders and laurels, Muzzio began to relate his adventures. He told of the distant lands he had seen, of cloud-topped mountains and deserts, rivers like seas; he told of immense buildings, and temples, of trees a thousand years old, of birds and flowers of the colors of the rainbow; he named the cities and the peoples he had visited . . . their very names seemed like a fairy-tale. The whole East was familiar to Muzzio; he had traversed Persia, Arabia, where the horses are nobler and more beautiful than any other living creatures; he had penetrated into the very heart of India, where the race of men grow like stately trees; he had reached the boundaries of China and Tibet, where the living god, called the Grand Lama, dwells on earth in the guise of a silent man with narrow eyes.

Marvelous were his tales, and both Fabio and Valeria listened to him as if enchanted. Muzzio's features had really changed very little; his face, swarthy from childhood, had grown darker still, burnt under

the rays of a hotter sun, his eyes seemed more deep-set than before—and that was all; but the expression of his face had become different: concentrated and dignified, it never showed more life when he recalled the dangers he had encountered by night in forests that resounded with the roar of tigers or by day on solitary ways where savage fanatics lay in wait for travelers, to slay them in honor of their iron goddess who demands human sacrifices. And Muzzio's voice had grown deeper and more even; his hands, his whole body had lost the freedom of gesture peculiar to the Italian race. With the aid of his servant, the obsequiously alert Malay, he showed his hosts a few of the feats he had learnt from the Indian Brahmins. Thus for instance, having first hidden himself behind a curtain, he suddenly appeared sitting in the air cross-legged, the tips of his fingers pressed lightly on a bamboo cane placed vertically, which astounded Fabio not a little and positively alarmed Valeria. "Isn't he a sorcerer?" was her thought.

When he proceeded, piping on a little flute, to call some tame snakes out of a covered basket, where their dark flat heads with quivering tongues appeared under a parti-colored cloth, Valeria was terrified and begged Muzzio to put away these loathsome horrors as soon as possible.

At supper Muzzio regaled his friends with wine of Shiraz from a round long-necked flagon; it was of extraordinary fragrance and thickness, of a golden color with a shade of green in it, and it shone with a strange brightness as it was poured into the tiny jasper goblets. In taste it was unlike European wines: it was very sweet and spicy, and, drunk slowly in small drafts, produced a sensation of pleasant drowsiness in all the limbs. Muzzio made both Fabio and Valeria drink a goblet of it, and he drank one himself. Bending over her goblet he murmured something, moving his fingers as he did so. Valeria noticed this; but as in all Muzzio's doings, in his whole behavior, there was something strange and out of the common, she only thought, "Can he have adopted some new faith in India, or is that the custom there?"

After a short silence she asked him if he had persevered with music during his travels. Muzzio, in reply, bade the Malay bring his Indian violin. It was like those of today, but instead of four strings it had only three, the upper part of it was covered with a bluish snake-skin, and the slender bow of reed was in the form of a half-moon, and on its extreme end glittered a pointed diamond.

Muzzio played first some mournful airs, national songs, as he told them, strange and even barbarous to an Italian ear; the sound of the metallic strings was plaintive and feeble. But when Muzzio began the last song, it suddenly gained force and rang out tunefully and powerfully; the passionate melody flowed out under the wide sweeps of the bow, flowed out, exquisitely twisting and coiling like the snake that covered the violin-top; and such fire, such triumphant bliss glowed and burned in this melody that Fabio and Valeria felt wrung to the heart and tears came into their eyes; while Muzzio, his head bent, and pressed close to the violin, his cheeks pale, his eyebrows drawn together into a single straight line, seemed still more concentrated and solemn; and the diamond at the end of the bow flashed sparks of light as though it, too, were kindled by the fire of the divine song.

When Muzzio had finished, and still keeping fast the violin between his chin and his shoulder, dropped the hand that held the bow, Fabio

cried, "What is that? What is that you have been playing to us?" Valeria uttered not a word—but her whole being seemed echoing her husband's question.

Muzzio laid the violin on the table—and slightly tossing back his hair, he said with a polite smile: "That—that melody . . . that song I heard once in the island of Ceylon. That song is known there among the people as the song of happy, triumphant love." "Play it again," Fabio was murmuring. "No; it can't be played again," answered Muzzio. "Besides, it is now too late. Signora Valeria ought to be at rest; and it is time for me, too. I am weary."

During the whole day Muzzio had treated Valeria with respectful simplicity, as a friend of former days, but as he went out he clasped her hand very tightly, squeezing his fingers on her palm, and looking so intently into her face that though she did not raise her eyelids, she yet felt the look on her suddenly flaming cheeks. She said nothing to Muzzio, but jerked away her hand, and when he was gone, she gazed at the door through which he had passed out. She remembered how she had been a little afraid of him even in old days, and now she was overcome by perplexity. Muzzio went off to his pavilion; the husband and wife went to their bedroom.

4

VALERIA did not quickly fall asleep; there was a faint and languid fever in her blood and a slight ringing in her ears—from that strange wine, as she supposed, and perhaps, too, from Muzzio's stories, from his playing on the violin. Toward morning she did at last fall asleep, and she had an extraordinary dream.

She dreamt that she was going into a large room with a low ceiling. Such a room she had never seen in her life. All the walls were covered with tiny blue tiles with gold lines on them; slender carved pillars of alabaster supported the marble ceiling; the ceiling itself and the pillars seemed half transparent, and a pale rosy light penetrated from all sides into the room, throwing a mysterious and uniform light on all the objects in it; brocaded cushions lay on a narrow rug in the very middle of the floor, which was smooth as a mirror. In the corners, almost unseen, were smoking lofty censers, of the shape of monstrous beasts; there was no window anywhere; a door hung with a velvet curtain stood dark and silent in a recess in the wall. And suddenly this curtain slowly glided, moved aside, and in came Muzzio. He bowed, opened his arms, laughed. His fierce arms enfolded Valeria's waist; his parched lips burned her all over. . . . She fell backward on the cushions.

Moaning with horror, after long struggles, Valeria awoke. Still not realizing where she was and what was happening to her, she raised herself on her bed, looked around. A tremor ran over her whole body. . . . Fabio was lying beside her. He was asleep; but his face in the light of the brilliant full moon looking in at the window was pale as a corpse's—it was sadder than a dead face. Valeria waked her husband, and directly he looked at her. "What is the matter?" he cried. "I had—I had a fearful dream," she whispered, still shuddering all over.

But at that instant from the direction of the pavilion came floating powerful sounds, and both Fabio and Valeria recognized the melody Muzzio had played to them, calling it the song of blissful, triumphant love. Fabio looked in perplexity at Valeria. She closed her eyes, turned away, and both holding their breath, heard the song out to the end. As the last note died away, the moon passed behind a cloud, it was sud-

denly dark in the room. . . . Both the young people let their heads sink on their pillows without exchanging a word, and neither of them noticed when the other fell asleep.

5

THE next morning Muzzio came in to breakfast; he seemed happy and greeted Valeria cheerfully. She answered him in confusion—stole a glance at him—and felt frightened at the sight of that serene happy face, those piercing and inquisitive eyes. Muzzio was beginning again to tell some story, but Fabio interrupted him at the first word.

"You could not sleep, I see, in your new quarters. My wife and I heard you playing last night's song."

"Yes! Did you hear it?" said Muzzio. "I played it indeed; but I had been asleep before that, and I had a wonderful dream, too."

Valeria was on the alert. "What sort of dream?" asked Fabio.

"I dreamed," answered Muzzio, not taking his eyes off Valeria, "I was entering a spacious apartment with a ceiling decorated in Oriental fashion; carved columns supported the roof, the walls were covered with tiles, and though there were neither windows nor lights, the whole room was filled with a rosy light, just as though it were all built of transparent stone. In the corners, Chinese censers were smoking, on the floor lay brocaded cushions along a narrow rug. I went in through a door covered with a curtain, and at another door just opposite appeared a woman whom I once loved. And so beautiful she seemed to me, that I was all aflame with my old love——"

Muzzio broke off significantly. Valeria sat motionless, and only gradually she turned white, and she drew her breath more slowly.

"Then," continued Muzzio, "I waked up and played that song."

"But who was that woman?" said Fabio.

"Who was she? The wife of an Indian—I met her in the town of Delhi. She is not alive now—she died."

"And her husband?" asked Fabio, not knowing why he asked the question.

"Her husband, too, they say is dead. I soon lost sight of them both."

"Strange!" observed Fabio. "My wife, too, had an extraordinary dream last night"—Muzzio gazed intently at Valeria—"which she did not tell me," added Fabio.

But at this point Valeria got up and went out of the room. Immediately after breakfast, Muzzio, too, went away, explaining that he had to be in Ferrara on business, and that he would not be back before the evening.

6

A FEW weeks before Muzzio's return, Fabio had begun a portrait of his wife, depicting her with the attributes of Saint Cecilia. He had made considerable advance in his art; the renowned Luini, a pupil of Leonardo da Vinci, used to come to him at Ferrara, and while aiding him with his own counsels, pass on also the precepts of his great master. The portrait was almost completely finished; all that was left was to add a few strokes to the face, and Fabio might well be proud of his creation.

He saw Muzzio off on his way to Ferrara, then turned into his studio, where Valeria was usually waiting for him; but he did not find her there. He called her; she did not respond. Fabio was overcome by a secret uneasiness; he began looking for her.

She was nowhere in the house. Fabio ran into the garden, and there in one of the more secluded walks he caught sight of Valeria. She was sitting on a seat, her head drooping on to her bosom and her hands folded upon her knees; while behind her,

peeping out of the dark green of a cypress, a marble satyr, with a distorted malignant grin on his face, was putting his pouting lips to a Pan's pipe. Valeria was visibly relieved at her husband's appearance, and to his agitated questions she replied that she had a slight headache, but that it was of no consequence, and she was ready to come to sit to him.

Fabio led her to the studio, posed her, and took up his brush; but to his great vexation, he could not finish the face as he would have liked to. And not because it was somewhat pale and looked exhausted . . . no; but the pure, saintly expression, which he liked so much in it, and which had given him the idea of painting Valeria as Saint Cecilia, he could not find in it that day. He flung down the brush at last, told his wife he was not in the mood for work, and that he would not prevent her from lying down, as she did not look at all well, and put the canvas with its face to the wall. Valeria agreed with him that she ought to rest, and repeating her complaints of a headache, withdrew into her bedroom.

Fabio remained in the studio. He felt a strange confused sensation incomprehensible to himself. Muzzio's stay under his roof, to which he, Fabio, had himself urgently invited him, was irksome to him. And not that he was jealous—could anyone have been jealous of Valeria!—but he did not recognize his former comrade in his friend. All that was strange, unknown and new that Muzzio had brought with him from those distant lands—and which seemed to have entered into his very flesh and blood—all these magical feats, songs, strange drinks, this dumb Malay, even the spicy fragrance diffused by Muzzio's garments, his hair, his breath—all this inspired in Fabio a sensation akin to distrust, possibly even to timidity. And why did that Malay waiting at table stare with such disagreeable intentness at him, Fabio? Really anyone might suppose that he understood Italian. Muzzio had said of him that in losing his tongue, this Malay had made a great sacrifice, and in return he was now possessed of great power. What sort of power? and how could he have obtained it at the price of his tongue? All this was very strange, very incomprehensible!

Fabio went into his wife's room; she was lying on the bed, dressed, but was not asleep. Hearing his steps, she started, then again seemed delighted to see him just as in the garden. Fabio sat down beside the bed, took Valeria by the hand, and after a short silence, asked her what was the extraordinary dream that had frightened her so the previous night. And was it the same sort at all as the dream Muzzio had described? Valeria crimsoned and said hurriedly: "Oh! no! no! I saw —a sort of monster which was trying to tear me to pieces."

"A monster in the shape of a man?" asked Fabio. "No, a beast—a beast!" Valeria turned away and hid her burning face in the pillows.

Fabio held his wife's hand some time longer; silently he raised it to his lips, and withdrew.

Both the young people passed that day with heavy hearts. Something dark seemed hanging over their heads, but what it was, they could not tell. They wanted to be together, as though some danger threatened them; but what to say to one another they did not know. Fabio made an effort to take up the portrait, and to read Ariosto, whose poem had appeared not long before in Ferrara, and was now making a noise all over Italy; but nothing was of any use.

Late in the evening, just at supper-time, Muzzio returned.

7

He seemed composed and cheerful —but he told them little; he devoted himself rather to questioning Fabio about their common acquaintances, about the German war, and the Emperor Charles: he spoke of his own desire to visit Rome, to see the new Pope. He again offered Valeria some Shiraz wine, and on her refusal, observed as though to himself, "Now it's not needed, to be sure."

Going back with his wife to their room, Fabio soon fell asleep; and waking up an hour later, felt a conviction that no one was sharing his bed; Valeria was not beside him. He got up quickly and at the same instant saw his wife in her night attire coming out of the garden into the room. The moon was shining brightly, though not long before a light rain had been falling. With eyes closed, with an expression of mysterious horror on her immovable face, Valeria approached the bed, and feeling for it with her hands stretched out before her, lay down hurriedly and in silence. Fabio turned to her with a question, but she made no reply; she seemed to be asleep. He touched her, and felt on her dress and on her hair drops of rain, and on the soles of her bare feet, little grains of sand. Then he leapt up and ran into the garden through the half-open door. The crude brilliance of the moon wrapt every object in light. Fabio looked about him, and perceived on the sand of the path prints of two pairs of feet—one pair were bare; and these prints led to a bower of jasmine, on one side, between the pavilion and the house. He stood still in perplexity, and suddenly once more he heard the strains of the song he had listened to the night before.

Fabio shuddered, ran into the pavilion. Muzzio was standing in the middle of the room playing on the violin. Fabio rushed up to him.

"You have been in the garden, your clothes are wet with rain."

"No . . . I don't know . . . I think . . . I have not been out . . ." Muzzio answered slowly, seeming amazed at Fabio's entrance and his excitement.

Fabio seized him by the hand. "And why are you playing that melody again? Have you had a dream again?"

Muzzio glanced at Fabio with the same look of amazement, and said nothing.

"Answer me!"

"The moon stood high like a round shield . . .
Like a snake, the river shines . . .,
The friend's awake, the foe's asleep . . .
The bird is in the falcon's clutches . . .
Help!"

muttered Muzzio, humming to himself as though in delirium.

Fabio stepped back two paces, stared at Muzzio, pondered a moment, and went back to the house, to his bedroom.

Valeria, her head sunk on her shoulder and her hands hanging lifelessly, was in a heavy sleep. He could not quickly awaken her—but directly she saw him, she flung herself on his neck, and embraced him convulsively. She was trembling all over.

"What is the matter, my precious, what is it?" Fabio kept repeating, trying to soothe her. But she still lay lifeless on his breast.

"Ah, what fearful dreams I have!" she whispered, hiding her face against him. Fabio would have questioned her, but she only shuddered. The window-panes were flushed with the early light of morning when at last she fell asleep in his arms.

8

The next day Muzzio disappeared from early morning, while Valeria informed her husband that she intended to go away to a neighbor-

ing monastery, where lived her spiritual father, an old and austere monk, in whom she placed unbounded confidence. To Fabio's inquiries she replied that she wanted by confession to relieve her soul, which was weighed down by the exceptional impressions of the last few days. As he looked upon Valeria's sunken face, and listened to her faint voice, Fabio approved of her plan; the worthy Father Lorenzo might give her valuble advice, and might disperse her doubts.

Under the escort of four attendants, Valeria set off to the monastery, while Fabio remained at home, and wandered about the garden till his wife's return, trying to comprehend what had happened to her, and a victim to constant fear and wrath, and the pain of undefined suspicions. More than once he went up to the pavilion; but Muzzio had not returned and the Malay gazed at Fabio like a statue, obsequiously bowing his head, with a well-dissembled—so at least it seemed to Fabio—smile on his bronzed face.

Meanwhile, Valeria had in confession told everything to her priest, not so much with shame as with horror. The priest heard her attentively, gave her his blessing, absolved her from her involuntary sin, but to himself he thought: "Sorcery, the arts of the devil—the matter can't be left so," and he returned with Valeria to her villa, as though with the aim of completely pacifying and reassuring her.

At the sight of the priest, Fabio was thrown into some agitation; but the experienced old man had thought out beforehand how he must treat him. When he was left alone with Fabio, he did not of course betray the secrets of the confessional, but he advised him if possible to get rid of the guest they had invited to their house, as by his stories, his songs, and his whole behavior he was troubling the imagination of Valeria. Moreover, in the old man's opinion, Muzzio had not, he remembered, been very firm in the faith in former days, and having spent so long a time in lands unenlightened by the truths of Christianity, he might well have brought thence the contagion of false doctrine, might even have become conversant with secret magic arts; and, therefore, though long friendship had indeed its claims, still a wise prudence pointed to the necessity of separation.

Fabio fully agreed with the excellent monk. Valeria was even joyful when her husband reported to her the priest's counsel; and sent on his way with the cordial good-will of both the young people, loaded with good gifts for the monastery and the poor, Father Lorenzo returned home.

Fabio intended to have an explanation with Muzzio immediately after supper; but his strange guest did not return to supper. Then Fabio decided to defer his conversation with Muzzio until the following day; and both the young people retired to rest.

VALERIA soon fell asleep; but Fabio could not sleep. In the stillness of the night, everything he had seen, everything he had felt presented itself more vividly; he put to himself still more insistently questions to which as before he could find no answer. Had Muzzio really become a sorcerer, and had he not already poisoned Valeria? She was ill—but what was her disease? While he lay, his head in his hand, holding his feverish breath, and given up to painful reflection, the moon rose again upon a cloudless sky; and together with its beams, through the half-transparent window-panes, there began, from the direction of the pavilion—or was it Fabio's fancy?—to come a breath, like a light, fragrant current; then an urgent, passionate murmur was heard, and at

that instant he observed that Valeria was beginning faintly to stir. He started, looked; she rose up, slid first one foot, then the other out of the bed, and like one bewitched of the moon, her sightless eyes fixed lifelessly before her, her hands stretched out, she began moving toward the garden! Fabio instantly ran out of the other door of the room, and running quickly round the corner of the house, bolted the door that led into the garden. He had scarcely time to grasp at the bolt, when he felt someone trying to open the door from the inside, pressing against it . . . again and again . . . and then there was the sound of piteous passionate moans . . .

"But Muzzio has not come back from the town," flashed through Fabio's head, and he rushed to the pavilion.

Coming toward him, along the path dazzlingly lighted up by the moon's rays, was Muzzio, he too moving like one moonstruck, his hands held out before him, and his eyes open but unseeing. Fabio ran up to him, but he, not heeding him, moved on, treading evenly, step by step, and his rigid face smiled in the moonlight like the Malay's. Fabio would have called him by his name, but at that instant he heard, behind him in the house, the creaking of a window. He looked round.

Yes, the window of the bedroom was open from top to bottom, and putting one foot over the sill, Valeria stood in the window. Her hands seemed to be seeking Muzzio —she seemed striving all over toward him. . . .

Unutterable fury filled Fabio's breast with a sudden inrush. "Accursed sorcerer!" he shrieked furiously, and seizing Muzzio by the throat with one hand, with the other he felt for the dagger in his girdle, and plunged the blade into his side up to the hilt.

Muzzio uttered a shrill scream, and clapping his hand to the wound, ran staggering back to the pavilion. But at the very same instant when Fabio stabbed him, Valeria screamed just as shrilly, and fell to the earth like grass before the scythe.

Fabio flew to her, raised her up, carried her to the bed, began to speak to her. . . .

She lay a long time motionless, but at last she opened her eyes, heaved a deep, broken, blissful sigh, like one just rescued from imminent death, saw her husband, and twining her arms about his neck, crept close to him.

"You, you, it is you," she faltered. Gradually her hands loosened their hold, her head sank back, and murmuring with a blissful smile, "Thank God, it is all over. . . . But how weary I am!" she fell into a sound but not heavy sleep.

10

Fabio sank down beside her bed, and never taking his eyes off her pale and sunken, but already calmer, face, began reflecting on what had happened, and also on how he ought to act now. What steps was he to take? If he had killed Muzzio—and remembering how deeply the dagger had gone in, he could have no doubt of it—it could not be hidden. He would have to bring it to the knowledge of the archduke, of the judges —but how explain, how describe such an incomprehensible affair? He, Fabio, had killed in his own house his own kinsman, his dearest friend! They will inquire, "What for? on what grounds?" But if Muzzio were not dead? Fabio could not endure to remain longer in uncertainty, and satisfying himself that Valeria was asleep, he cautiously got up from his chair, went out of the house, and made his way to the pavilion. Everything was still in it; only in one window a light was visible.

With a sinking heart he opened the outer door (there was still the print of blood-stained fingers on it, and there were black drops of gore on the sand of the path), passed through the first dark room—and stood still on the threshold, overwhelmed with amazement.

In the middle of the room, on a Persian rug, with a brocaded cushion under his head, and all his limbs stretched out straight, lay Muzzio, covered with a wide, red shawl with a black pattern on it. His face, yellow as wax, with closed eyes and bluish eyelids, was turned toward the ceiling. No breathing could be discerned: he seemed a corpse. At his feet knelt the Malay, also wrapt in a red shawl. He was holding in his left hand a branch of some unknown plant, like a fern, and bending slightly forward, was gazing fixedly at his master. A small torch fixed on the floor burnt with a greenish flame, and was the only light in the room. The flame did not flicker nor smoke.

The Malay did not stir at Fabio's entry, he merely turned his eyes upon him, and again bent them upon Muzzio. From time to time he raised and lowered the branch, and waved it in the air, and his dumb lips slowly parted and moved as though uttering soundless words. On the floor between the Malay and Muzzio lay the dagger with which Fabio had stabbed his friend; the Malay struck one blow with the branch on the blood-stained blade. A minute passed . . . another.

Fabio approached the Malay, and stooping down to him, asked in an undertone, "Is he dead?" The Malay bent his head from above downward, and disentangling his right hand from his shawl, he pointed imperiously to the door. Fabio would have repeated his question, but the gesture of the commanding hand was repeated, and Fabio went out, indignant and wondering, but obedient.

He found Valeria sleeping as before, with an even more tranquil expression on her face. He did not undress, but seated himself by the window, his head in his hand, and once more sank into thought. The rising sun found him still in the same place. Valeria had not waked up.

11

Fabio intended to wait till she awakened, and then to set off to Ferrara, when suddenly someone tapped lightly at the bedroom door. Fabio went out, and saw his old steward, Antonio. "*Signor*," began the old man, "the Malay has just informed me that Signor Muzzio has been taken ill, and wishes to be moved with all his belongings to the town; and that he begs you to let him have servants to assist in packing his things; and that at dinner-time you would send pack-horses, and saddle-horses, and a few attendants for the journey. Do you allow it?" "The Malay informed you of this?" asked Fabio. "In what manner? Why, he is dumb." "Here, *Signor*, is the paper on which he wrote all this in our language, and very correctly." "And Muzzio, you say, is ill?" "Yes, he is very ill, and can see no one." "Have they sent for a doctor?" "No. The Malay forbade it." "And was it the Malay who wrote you this?" "Yes, it was he." Fabio did not speak for a moment. "Well, then, arrange it all," he said at last. Antonio withdrew.

Fabio looked after his servant in bewilderment. "Then, he is not dead," he thought, and he did not know whether to rejoice or to be sorry. "Ill?" But a few hours ago it was a corpse he had looked upon!

Fabio returned to Valeria. She waked up and raised her head. The husband and wife exchanged a long look full of significance. "He is

gone?" Valeria said suddenly. Fabio shuddered. "How gone? Is he gone away?" she continued.

A load fell from Fabio's heart. "Not yet; but he is going today." "And I shall never, never see him again?" "Never." "And these dreams will not come again?" "No."

Valeria heaved a sigh of relief; a blissful smile once more appeared on her lips. She held out both hands to her husband. "And we will never speak of him, never, do you hear, my dear one? And I will not leave my room till he is gone. And do you now send me my maids. But stay: take away that thing!" she pointed to the pearl necklace, lying on a little bedside table, the necklace given her by Muzzio, "and throw it at once into our deepest well. Embrace me. I am your Valeria; and do not come in to me till—he has gone."

Fabio took the necklace and did as his wife had directed. Then he fell to wandering about the garden, looking from a distance at the pavilion, about which the bustle of preparations for departure was beginning. Servants were bringing out boxes, loading the horses—but the Malay was not among them. An irresistible impulse drew Fabio to look once more upon what was taking place in the pavilion. He recollected that there was at the back a secret door, by which he could reach the inner room where Muzzio had been lying in the morning. He stole round to this door, found it unlocked, and, parting the folds of a heavy curtain, turned a faltering glance upon the room within.

12

Muzzio was not now lying on the rug. Dressed as though for a journey, he sat in an armchair, but seemed a corpse, just as on Fabio's first visit. His torpid head fell back on the chair, and his outstretched hands hung lifeless, yellow and rigid on his knees. His breast did not heave. Near the chair on the floor, which was strewn with dried herbs, stood some flat bowls of dark liquid, which exhaled a powerful, almost suffocating, odor, the odor of musk. Around each bowl was coiled a small snake of brazen hue, with golden eyes that flashed from time to time; while directly facing Muzzio, two paces from him, rose the long figure of the Malay, wrapt in a mantle of many-colored brocade, girt round the waist with a tiger's tail, with a high hat of the shape of a pointed tiara on his head. But he was not motionless: at one moment he bowed down reverently, and seemed to be praying, at the next he drew himself up to his full height, even rose on tiptoe; then, with a rhythmic action, threw wide his arms, and moved them persistently in the direction of Muzzio, and seemed to threaten or command him, frowning and stamping with his foot. All these actions seemed to cost him great effort, even to cause him pain: he breathed heavily, the sweat streamed down his face. All at once he sank down to the ground, and drawing in a full breath, with knitted brow and immense effort, drew his clenched hands toward him, as though he were holding reins in them—and to the indescribable horror of Fabio, Muzzio's head slowly left the back of the chair, and moved forward, following the Malay's hands. The Malay let them fall, and Muzzio's head fell heavily back again; the Malay repeated his movements, and obediently the head repeated them after him. The dark liquid in the bowls began boiling; the bowls themselves began to resound with a faint bell-like note, and the brazen snakes coiled freely about each of them. Then the Malay took a step forward, and raising his eyebrows and opening his eyes immensely wide, he bowed his head to Muzzio . . . and the eyelids of the

dead man quivered, parted uncertainly, and under them could be seen the eyeballs, dull as lead. The Malay's face was radiant with triumphant pride and delight, a delight almost malignant; he opened his mouth wide, and from the depths of his chest there broke out with effort a prolonged howl. Muzzio's lips parted, too, and a faint moan quivered on them in response to that inhuman sound. . . .

But at this point Fabio could endure it no longer; he imagined he was present at some devilish incantation! He too uttered a shriek and rushed out, running home as quickly as possible, without looking round, repeating prayers and crossing himself as he ran.

13

THREE hours later, Antonio came to him with the announcement that everything was ready, the things were packed, and Signor Muzzio was preparing to start. Without a word in answer to his servant, Fabio went out on to the terrace, whence the pavilion could be seen. A few packhorses were grouped before it; a powerful raven horse, saddled for two riders, was led up to the steps, where servants were standing bareheaded, together with armed attendants. The door of the pavilion opened, and supported by the Malay, who wore once more his ordinary attire, appeared Muzzio. His face was deathlike, and his hands hung like a dead man's, but he walked — yes, positively walked—and, seated on the charger, he sat upright and felt for and found the reins. The Malay put his feet in the stirrups, leaped up behind him on the saddle, put his arm round him, and the whole party started. The horses moved at a walking pace, and when they turned round before the house, Fabio fancied that in Muzzio's dark face there gleamed two spots of white. Could it be he had turned his eyes upon him? Only the Malay bowed to him—ironically, as ever.

Did Valeria see all this? Her window-blinds were drawn—but it may be she was standing behind them.

14

AT DINNER-TIME she came into the dining room, and was very quiet and affectionate; she still complained, however, of weariness. But there was no agitation about her now, none of her former constant bewilderment and secret dread; and when, the day after Muzzio's departure, Fabio set to work again on her portrait, he found in her features the pure expression, the momentary eclipse of which had so troubled him, and his brush moved lightly over the canvas.

The husband and wife took up their old life again. Muzzio vanished for them as though he had never existed. Fabio and Valeria were agreed, as it seemed, not to utter a syllable referring to him, not to learn anything of his later days; his fate remained, however, a mystery for all. Muzzio did actually disappear, as though he had sunk into the earth. Fabio one day thought it his duty to tell Valeria exactly what had taken place on that fatal night, but she probably divined his intention, and she held her breath, half-shutting her eyes, as though she were expecting a blow. Fabio understood her; and he did not inflict that blow upon her.

One fine autumn day, Fabio was putting the last touches to his picture of his Cecilia; Valeria sat at the organ, her fingers straying at random over the keys. Suddenly, without her knowing it, from under her hands came the first notes of that song of triumphant love which Muzzio had once played; and at the same instant, for the first time since her marriage, she felt within her the throb of a new palpitating life. . . . Valeria started, stopped. . . .

What did it mean? Could it be——

At this word the manuscript ended.

THE sales of WEIRD TALES continue to climb, and an increasing number of readers is attracted each month to this magazine of bizarre and unusual stories. We are eager to see the sales climb still higher, for we take pride in the magazine, and the more extensive the circulation is, the better the magazine will become. We want the help of you, the readers, in making the magazine better and better. You can give this help by continued and constructive criticism. Just what would you suggest, readers, to make the magazine still better? Write to The Eyrie and let us know in what way *you* would like your magazine improved, and your letters will receive very careful study. We think we have in WEIRD TALES a top-notch magazine, and the flood of letters from you, the readers, as well as the rapid growth of the magazine, strengthens this belief; but we realize there are numberless ways in which the magazine can be made still better, and we welcome suggestions from you; for this is *your* magazine.

The discussion keeps up as to whether we should continue to print one weird tale of the past each month in our "Weird Story Reprint" section, and this month, for the first time, those who are opposed to the reprints have made a good showing, though they are still greatly in the minority.

"Your reprints are old and stale, dry and very uninteresting," writes Ralph C. Hartman, of Portsmouth, Virginia, "and you are ruining your magazine with serials. Cut out the reprints and serials."

Writes F. O. Rogers, of Washington, D. C.: "Allow me to congratulate you upon your choice of reprint in the story *Lazarus*. It is the best story published in WEIRD TALES for the past two years."

George Montague, of Trenton, New Jersey, writes to The Eyrie: "Your reprints I do not care so much about, but your other stories are 'way above par. I have just finished reading the first installment of *Explorers Into Infinity*. It is a wonderfully gripping tale, well told. For years your magazine has been my chief reading matter. Of course my brother claims he 'discovered' it, but I know I did."

As to the reprints, J. K. Sears, of Galveston, Texas, writes: "Truly there is no accounting for individual letters. All this talk about cutting out Poe's stories and the reprint department 'for the sake of a long-suffering public' is unworthy of intelligent human beings. WEIRD TALES is a wonderful fount of pleasure to all of us who enjoy weird fiction; don't spoil the reputation you have gained. Keep it weird, by all means."

Lorena Lockhard, of Los Angeles, writes to The Eyrie: "For over two

years I have read your delightful magazine, and I can truthfully say that I have never read its equal. I was disappointed, though, when I read in The Eyrie in the April number that you are going to continue the monthly reprint story. I have just laid the magazine up in despair, for, having read all the rest of your horrible, shivery and delightful stories, I attacked the reprint. Honestly, I couldn't finish it. I don't believe there has ever been one reprint which I started that I could finish. You have a magazine that would be ideal but for one thing, and that thing is the reprints."

"A few months ago," writes Miss Amy Beck, of Chisholm, Minnesota, "I picked up a copy of WEIRD TALES, and when I laid it down I had read every story, every poem, and every word in The Eyrie. So far I've not missed a copy. When the magazine comes I look for the reprint first; I think that a very good department in your magazine."

Philip H. Buscher, of Washington, D. C., writes to The Eyrie: "I have never written to this department before, but saw the suggestion made in The Eyrie by a gentleman in St. Louis, and I agree with him that you should stop the reprint stories. Use the space for your readers' own weird experiences in reality and dreams."

"By all means continue the 'reprint' stories," writes Llon Penhall Rees, of Toronto, Canada. "They serve as a foil for our newer, and very often better, authors of the present day."

"Your last three issues have been very fine," writes Robert E. Howard, from Cross Plains, Texas. "Certainly no magazine has ever offered a tale as unique and thought-inspiring as the serial by Mr. Cummings."

Writes John B. Woodhouse from on board the Hamburg-American steamer *Deutschland:* "I am on shipboard and have just finished my tenth WEIRD TALES. The magazine has helped me to pass away many happy hours that otherwise would have been boresome. Why not publish a list of all the stories in W. T. for the last twelve issues, and have the readers vote on the best five? Someone asked in The Eyrie a few months ago that you select the best stories from W. T. and publish them in book form. Well, why not? Such stories as *The Woman of the Wood, The Night Wire, The Atomic Conquerors, The White Ship* and *The Last Horror* are worthy of book form and a wide circulation."

"Please print some more insect stories like *The City of Spiders,*" writes Roland Fernekes, of Oakmont, Pennsylvania. "I am a new reader of your magazine, but I never regret the day I bought the first one. I like especially the scientific stories, such as *The Star Shell* and *Drome.*"

"Please give us more space-stories," writes James T. Ballew, of Newport News, Virginia, and adds: "They always make a hit. I have been a silent admirer of W. T. for a long time, and feel that I should let you hear from me relative to the stories I like best. I read each and every one, every month, but some I like better than others, which is very natural. I think *The Star Shell* was excellent, and I hope that *Explorers Into Infinity* turns out to be as good; it is very promising. *Drome* is also a wonderful piece of fiction, and I hope we have more such stories."

Writes Mrs. Marion M. Le Paire, of Detroit, Michigan: "Although usually I am not addicted to this type of fiction, a copy of WEIRD TALES—one of the first—was brought to me by my husband. I was immediately attracted by the diversity, originality and correctness of detail I found therein. Since then, each month finds me eagerly awaiting the appearance of WEIRD TALES. You have in it something unique, and while I could readily absorb a semi-

monthly additional issue, I believe the flavor and spice might be dimmed by too frequent publication."

Donald G. Ward, of Auburn, New York, writes to The Eyrie: "I ran across your magazine four months ago and bought the issue containing the first installment of *Drome*. This story is magnificent, something different from most stories. I buy WEIRD TALES for the weird-scientific stories. They far outclass all others, save Seabury Quinn's. Your best authors are Edmond Hamilton, Eli Colter and Quinn. Cummings is splendid, too, judging him by the first installment of the new serial, *Explorers Into Infinity*."

"The April number is splendid," writes Mrs. Roy Blaire, of Samoa, California. "May we have more tales relating to the supernatural, such as *The Return* and *Out of the Earth* in this issue. The latter, I think, is quite the best story in this number. I'd like more stories of werewolves and elementals, especially the latter. The interplanetary stories are interesting, but getting a bit stale, as everyone seems to be having a try at them. I like the stories of evolution, too."

"Poe would be in his element reading WEIRD TALES, I am sure," writes Helen Marchand, of West Haven, Connecticut. "I like the weird-scientific tales best; and I like particularly the stories having to do with that queer funny little French doctor, Jules de Grandin."

"*Drome* is one of the most interesting stories I have ever read," writes Eugene Cameron, of Tulsa, Oklahoma. "It is of scientific value and told in a way that isn't boring. *Explorers Into Infinity*, I am sure, is going to prove every bit as interesting as *Drome*."

"Boy, do I like Quinn's stories!" writes William E. Venable, of Anniston, Alabama. "I'm just crazy about the French scientist, Jules de Grandin, and his little expression, 'I say to me'."

Readers, your favorite story in the April WEIRD TALES, as shown by your votes, is the first installment of *Explorers Into Infinity*, by Ray Cummings. What is your favorite story in this issue?

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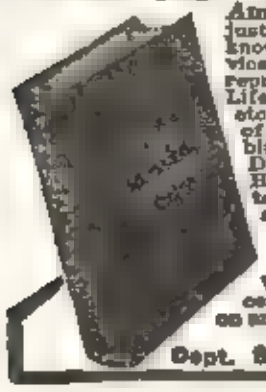

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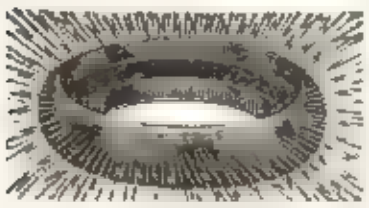

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The Dark Chrysalis

(Continued from page 766)

least. I think you will always be. No, I am sure of it. Let it go at that."

She bowed her head in assent and understanding, glanced once at Cloud and Arn, and walked out of the laboratory. Cloud walked over to the microscope. He glanced into it, then stopped short with a sharp intake of breath. Saul looked him straight in the eyes and Arn glanced from one to the other in puzzlement at the look that passed between them. Saul caught his expression of inquiry and silently motioned him toward the instrument.

Cloud stepped aside and Arn looked through the lens. He caught his breath as Cloud had done. The particle of flesh was swarming with the devil-fish microbes.

For a space grim silence held between the three men. Then Saul's voice came, hoarse with emotion. "To save her, I've got to save the world! She hasn't been well for a long time, I've seen. She's sick with fear. I've seen that, too. My God, we can't stand here staring at each other! Let's get to work!"

Grisly days of horror, of alternate hope and despair, and the thrill of scientific achievement are described in next month's installment of this story.

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A Suitor From the Shades

(Continued from page 746)

me in spite of all your calling." He laughed shortly. "I want to save all my strength, however, to appear to Margie, my false, lovely Margie," he added insinuatingly.

"This is really too much," exclaimed Ned, trying in vain to extricate his hand from the iron hold of the psychic. "I intend to see if that fellow is solid enough to feel the weight of my fist. Let me go, please!"

The Scotchwoman's strong hand maintained its immovable grip, and she turned to shake her head warningly at him. Then she spoke again to the intruder.

"You have been taking the psychic energy from this poor little lame girl, so that you could appear materially. For shame, Clifford Bentley! No matter what your motive, do you consider that a manly thing to do? What has Clare ever done to you, that you should subject her to such treatment? Look at the poor child now, helpless, her disturbed spirit torn with agony as she sees you clothed in the psychic vitality you have stolen from her in order to destroy her sister's happiness! Does not that stir your heart with remorse and pity?"

"It is entirely up to Margaret," replied the materialized Clifford. "I loved Margie. She promised to be my wife. She let me put my ring on her finger. She is morally bound to me. Now she is betraying me, for that other — that weak fellow whose silly brain I can sway as I choose," scornfully.

"That is a lie!"

This time Ned would have torn his hand from Mrs. Campbell's had she not cried hastily, "Mr. Wentworth, beware of what you are doing! If

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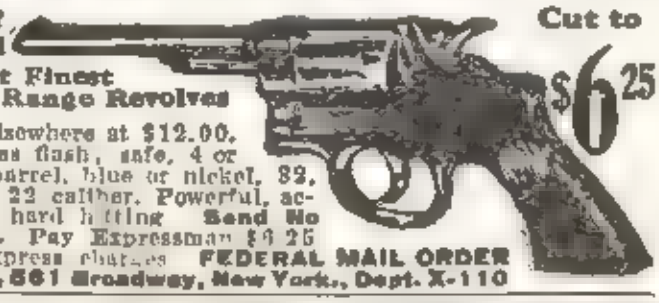

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you so much as injure a hair of his head, the harm done him will rebound—it will result in serious suffering to this little lame girl, entranced in our circle."

"It seems I find friends wherever I go," observed Clifford Bentley, with a mocking intonation that infuriated Wentworth. "Even Margie," he went on with pointed and deliberate malice, "lay in my arms last night, and returned my warm kisses with her own! She can not deny it, can you, Margie?"

Ned, his tanned skin pallid with unutterable horror and loathing, turned wide eyes upon the face of the girl whose hand he held; her lids dropped before his accusing gaze.

"Margie!" he groaned. "It isn't true, dear?"

"It might be well, Mr. Wentworth, to refrain from questions and accusations for the time being," observed Mrs. Campbell dryly. "You should be ashamed to think evil of the woman you love. Mr. Clifford Bentley, you have been telling a lie that is half truth, and that is the basest of lies. I must ask you now to tell the exact truth, or I shall waken Clare—you know I can do it — and after you have returned to your etheric form I shall take certain steps that will result in your being bound down for many years as you may not care to be bound. Oh, you may smile!—I assure you I can do this, much as I dislike it, and much as it may cost me. Are you going to speak?"

Somewhat sulkily, the unwelcome Clifford turned from her. "Oh, I suppose I must not refuse a lady's request, especially since it is put so persuasively," and he smiled sourly. "Very well, then — I lied about Margie. *I* kissed *her*. To be sure, she kissed me, too — but she didn't know it was I. But what does it matter, my dear lady?" he went on to Mrs. Campbell sarcastically. "If Margie won't remain true to her

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912,

Of Weird Tales, published monthly at Indianapolis, Indiana, for April 1, 1927.

State of Illinois } ss.
County of Cook }

Before me, a notary public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Wm. R. Sprenger, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of the Weird Tales and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are:

Publisher—Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 2457 E. Washington St., Indianapolis, Ind.

Editor—Farnsworth Wright, 450 E. Ohio St., Chicago, Ill.

Managing Editor—None.

Business Manager—William R. Sprenger. 450 E. Ohio St., Chicago, Ill.

2. That the owner is: (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding one per cent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a firm, company, or other unincorporated concern, its name and address, as well as those of each individual member must be given.)

Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 2457 E. Washington St., Indianapolis, Ind.

Wm. R. Sprenger, 450 E. Ohio St., Chicago, Illinois.

Farnsworth Wright, 450 E. Ohio St., Chicago, Illinois.

George M. Cornelius, 2457 E. Washington St., Indianapolis, Indiana.

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P. Cornelius, 2457 E. Washington St., Indianapolis, Indiana.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: (If there are none, so state). None.

4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company, but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest, direct or indirect, in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

5. That the average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the six months preceding the date shown above is_____. (This information is required from daily publications only.)

WM. R. SPRENGER,
Business Manager.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 30th day of March, 1927. JAMES H. COREY,
[SEAL] Notary Public.
My commission expires July 12, 1927.

promise of her own free will, I shall have to see to it that she keeps her word and remains unwed. As long as Clare lives, I shall be able to get what I need to make myself not only visible, but tangible. Perhaps Margie won't like the idea of that," he finished, turning his terrible, burning eyes upon Margaret.

"As long as Clare lives?" said the seeress, very slowly and gravely. "And—when she shall have passed over——?"

"When she joins me here, I shall have a companion whom I can love. When I can not come back any more, I shall remain with her. She has a tender heart; she would be kind to me. I have been so lonesome here—no one knows how lonesome!"

Another voice fell clearly upon the ears of those present. All recognized it as Clare's, although it sounded far away. The words issued slowly but distinctly from the entranced girl's lips.

"Margie—Dad—Ned—I can see you and hear you, although I am not in my poor sick body. All is well with me. Don't forget that. *All is well with me here.* I am very happy. Here all is life and light. I am not lame here. I can run as Margie runs in our garden. Don't call me back! I am so happy here! I can be near you all when I please—and I feel no pain — only such a happiness as I never felt before. You won't call me back to limp on my crutches again, will you, dear ones?"

Clifford Bentley began wringing his hands with a kind of tense anguish that was terrible to behold. Now his voice rang out clearly.

"Oh, I have done wrong. I see it now. Poor little Clare! It is my fault that you will not return. I have made your earth life wretched, poor child. Forgive me, little Clare. I promise never to trouble Margie again, for your sake!"

"Poor Clifford!" How heavenly

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sweet were the tones of Clare's far-away voice! "You were lonely. Now I understand. And I can not blame you, poor lonely Clifford. After all, you must not reproach yourself — I shall be happier here — I can be with my dear ones as I choose — and I shall suffer no more with a weak heart and useless feet."

The figure of the entranced girl sank lower in the chair. The psychic cried out suddenly as she felt that cold hand pulling on her own warm one.

"Turn on the lights!" she commanded, her voice agitated and alarmed. "Oh, why did I consent to this! I know what Douglas will say to me, now."

Margaret, almost holding her breath, heard a soft whisper in her ear. "Good-bye, my Margie. I shall always be near you. God bless you, dear."

Ned, still holding his sweetheart's hand tightly in his own, felt a soft cheek brush his, and he trembled on the verge of tears. Something told him it was Clare's farewell to him.

DR. SLOANE fumbled for the electric switch. As he put out his hand to turn it on, the figure of Clifford Bentley dissolved into thin nothingness before the eyes of the dazed members of the circle.

The door opened softly.

Father Rooney, his old face pale and drawn, tiptoed into the room. Without a word he went to Clare's side, passing the Scotchwoman, who stood looking sadly down upon the lame girl's slight figure. Upon the white brow he made the sign of a cross reverently. Then he faced the others, a sob rising chokingly in his throat as he spoke, his eyes meeting those of the doctor pityingly.

"Her spirit passed me as I waited without. Our little Clare is with the angels."

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